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HUJAJ'UL BEHEYEH

(THE BEHAI PROOFS)

BY

MIRZA-ABUL-FAZL

OF GULPAYGAN, PERSIA.

Abū al-Faḍl, Gulpaygānī

TRANSLATED BY

ALI KULI KHAN.

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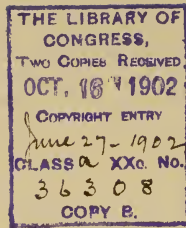
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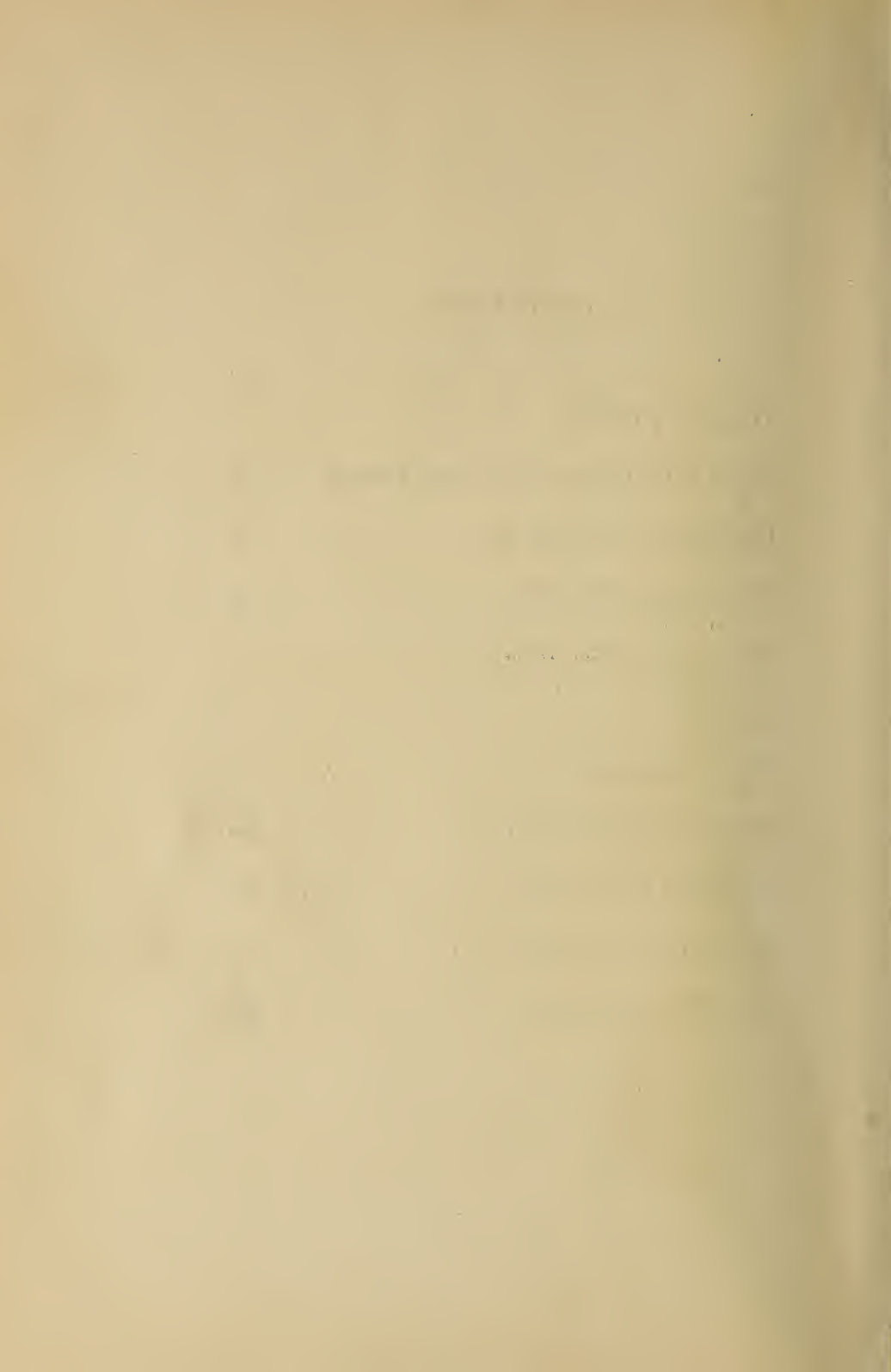
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Translator's Preface.

In the Name of our Lord the El-Beha!

Praise be unto Thee, O Thou God of the world and Creator of nations! Exalted is Thy praise and sanctified is Thy name! O Lord! Enable us to accomplish our work through Thy mercy, and facilitate unto us our affairs!

Verily, Thou art the Bestower! There is no God but Thee, the First and the Last!

As many thoughtful people of the United States of America have expressed their desire to obtain information concerning the Behai Religion, and since there is no book to be found in Europe or America, free from religious prejudice and fanaticism, furnishing full particulars upon this subject; I have therefore determined to translate two of the writings of the Honorable Mirza-Abul-Fazl of Gulpaygan, Persia, which contain the required information. By this means, I hope to be of service to humanity; for an exact statement of historical facts, free from religious and racial bias, is bound to be of great service to the world, inasmuch as it concerns the greatest religious movement of the age.

Although the art of translation is one of the difficult branches of literature and composition, yet, trusting in the Divine Confirmation and

strengthening of my weak efforts, I hope to bring the substance of these two works to the notice of the reader, in as close conformity with the original sense as my knowledge of English and the difficulty of the text permit.

The first work of the author, following this preface, is my translation of a short sketch in Persian, of the history and lives of the leaders of this Religion. The second is a translation from the Arabic, of an introductory work to a forthcoming book, which he is writing in compliance with the Command of our Master, Abdul-Beha-Abbas. The subject of this later work will be interpretation of the Holy Books of former religions, in order that the principal doctrines, proofs and arguments of the Behaïs may be known to the world.

These writings, I have translated in compliance with the especial Command of our Lord Abdul-Beha. One night, about fourteen months ago, while I was in Haifa, and the author at Port Said, Our Lord inquired from Ahmad Yazdi (who had arrived from Port-Said), concerning the welfare of Mirza-Abul-Fazl; to which he replied that Mirza was well and engaged in writing his book. A number of American and Paris visitors, who had also arrived from Port-Said, were present. Then our Beloved Master turned to me, saying:—"Khan: you must translate this book into English. God will confirm you therein." I bowed to Him and said it would be the greatest honor for me to comply with His Command.

In the following I will give a succinct account of the life of the author:—

Mirza-Abul-Fazl was born in 1844, in Gulpaygan, a small Persian town, founded by Humay, the daughter of Darius I. The family to which his parents belong is one of the most distinguished of that city, and, even to the present time, is well-known for learning and knowledge. His father, Mirza-Reza, was one of the most noted Shi'ite doctors of religion in Persia; he died in 1871, at the age of seventy.

In the prime of youth, Mirza-Abul-Fazl travelled to Isfahan and Irak, with the object of perfecting his studies. Even in his boyhood he was noted for intelligence, sound memory, and diligence in discovering subtle scientific points, to such an extent, that these qualities seemed to the people supernatural.

Last spring, in Paris, one of the Persian students, named Nassr-Ullah-Khan, spoke of Haji-Mollah-Hassan, a great scientific lecturer of Isfahan, who had been one of the pupils of Mirza-Abul-Fazl. In the course of conversation, he said that when, in 1866, the first edition of the Arabic Dictionary, entitled "Firooz-Abadi," one of the most authoritative and well-known works, was published in Tabriz, Persia, the students of the College of Sadr of Isfahan brought a copy of it to Mirza-Abul-Fazl for criticism. He, in one evening, examined the whole contents of the book, about 1,400 pages, and asserted that it contained but two words with wrong accentuation. After

in the following I will give a succinct account of a long and careful examination by the learned scholars of Isfahan, it was found that this statement, made by the author after a few hours' investigation, was correct.

Before he was twenty-two years of age, Mirza Abul-Fazl had perfected himself in the branches of Arabic learning, such as Grammar, Rhetoric, Etymology and Composition, although Arabic is a foreign language to Persians. In accordance with the wishes of his father, he also acquired a perfect knowledge of Mohammedan Theology and Laws. At the same time, he studied Mathematics, Algebra, Arithmetic, Geometry, and Astronomy according to the Ptolemaic system. He also mastered the Aristotelian as well as the rational Mohammedan philosophy.

In October, 1873, he left the town of Gulpaygan and went to Teheran, the capital of Persia, where he took up his residence. A short time after his arrival, he was appointed the superintendent and professor of one of the oldest first class Arabic Universities of Teheran, named the "School of Hakim-Hashem." There, students of different sciences gathered around him and attended his lectures.

In 1875, he became acquainted with a merchant named Aga-Abdul-Kerim of Isfahan, an adherent of the Behāi Religion. As this merchant found Mirza-Abul-Fazl sagacious and free from prejudice, he invited him to join his religion. Although Aga-Abdul-Kerim had no schooling, yet he possessed a shrewd, acute mind and an excellent

Translator's Preface.

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character. He arranged interviews for Mirza-Abul-Fazl with learned Behai teachers, such as His Holiness the great Nabil, entitled "The Learned One of Ka'een," the late Haji Mohammed-Isma'il of Kashan, entitled "Zabih" (sacrificed), Aga-Mirza-Heydar-Ali of Ardistan, and others. They continued the controversy and religious and scientific debate during eight months. Finally, in September, 1876, after this ample discussion and tedious argument, Mirza-Abul-Fazl, finding himself unable to refute and resist the proofs and demonstrations of the Behais, and esteeming the evidences of this movement stronger than the proofs of other religions, acknowledged and embraced the truth of the Religion of Beha-Ullah, and became a convert to it.

Among the proofs and evidences which he frequently related, are the following from his own words:—

"The oppression, deposition and murder of Sultan Abdul-Aziz of Turkey, which happened approximately in May, 1876; as well as the full particulars and details of the Turkö-Russian war, were explained to us in the early days of October, 1875, by Haji Mohammed-Isma'il Zabih, from the prophecies of Beha-Ullah. In that meeting, Aga-Abdul-Kerim of Isfahan, Aga-Mohammed-Hadi, the book-binder, of Isfahan, and Aga-Mirza-Ahmad, the braider, of Isfahan, were present. Haji Zabih read to us some Tablets, including the Tablet of Samandar (the title of Aga-Sheikh-Kazem, an old and prominent Behai teacher of

Kazwin, still living in that city), which contained a clear and explicit statement of these events. Then I said to Aga-Abdul-Kerim of Isfahan:—‘If the deposition of the Sultan and the Turko-Russian war take place and come to pass, this will be considered a great proof of the truth of Beha-Ullah,—greater than the miracles performed by former prophets.’ ”

Most of the students of Teheran have also heard the same subject spoken of by the author. For, in those days, the spread of the Religion of Beha-Ullah had just begun, and the persecutions, bloodshed and pillage inflicted upon the Behaïs were so great and violent, that no one dared mention their names in Persia, much less to praise them. But, as the author was considered a prominent man of learning, and had a great following of students, he spoke of these events in his lecture rooms with astonishment. Moreover, at this time, he had not yet become a Behai, nor could he or anyone imagine that the Behaïs would overcome him in controversy, and thus change his religion.

Afterward, in 1876, when Mirza-Abul-Fazl acknowledged the truth of this religion, and, on account of the straightforwardness for which he was noted, could not conceal his belief, he openly propounded proofs and arguments of the truth of Behaism, in his lectures to the students.

Consequently, enemies who were jealous of him, always waiting to accomplish his downfall, availed themselves of this opportunity to speak of him

in the presence of the clergy and prominent statesmen of Teheran. The clergy denounced him, and, in December of the same year, he was arrested and put in chains by the command of Prince Kamran-Mirza, entitled Nayeß-Essultana (Prince Regent), the third son of the late Nasser-Ed-Din Shah, who was then the governor of Teheran, Guilan and Mazanderan. This imprisonment lasted about five months. As a result of this imprisonment, he lost all the property which he had inherited from his father. At the end of five months, he and other Behaïs imprisoned with him on account of their faith, were released, owing to the efforts of the late Haji-Mirza-Hussien-Khan, entitled Mushire-Dawla, who was then Minister of War. Upon his release, the clergy of Teheran tried their utmost to persuade him to verbally acknowledge Mohammedanism, and not to openly uphold the truth of the Behai Religion. To this he would not agree, and patiently endured the most violent persecutions and afflictions rather than accede to the clergy and statesmen. Afterward he gained his living by means of his pen, and diligently labored in spreading the Behai Religion. Finally, in 1300 A. H. (1882 A. D.), came a great historical calamity. Large numbers of Behaïs were arrested in various Persian cities, for now this religion had become very prevalent throughout Persia and the Caucasus. A considerable number of the nobility, comprising Mohammedans, Jews, Zoroastrians, Nusseyrites, etc., had embraced it with the utmost sincerity, and

even did not recant when in danger of their lives. Consequently the fire of envy and hatred flamed anew in the clergy and statesmen of Teheran, who considered themselves defenders of the first-named religion. They agreed with the Prince Kamran-Mirza to persecute the Behaïs. So they falsely accused and calumniated them before the Shah. Also in Resht, Isfahan and Mazanderan, most of the clergy and statesmen determined to eradicate the Behaïs, and arrested a great number. Among these was Mirza-Abul-Fazl, who was arrested in Teheran, along with a multitude of the Behaïs of prominence, merchants, traders, etc. He was confined for about one month in the house of the Prince, and several controversial meetings and debates were held in the presence of the Prince, concerning this Religion.

The opponents of the Behaïs, consisting principally of members of the royal family, religious doctors and statesmen, constantly accused them of sedition and plots. Great efforts were made to alienate the mind of the Shah from them and to persuade him to decree their suppression and slaughter. But as they could not be charged with any violation of the laws of the Government, the Shah became convinced of their innocence, and would not consent to sentence them to death, but commanded them to be put in chains in the royal prison. Thus Mirza-Abul-Fazl and a number of the stanch Behaïs were imprisoned in chains and fetters for twenty-two months, subject to rigorous distress and hardship. During most of this time,

nobody was allowed to see them. Twenty-four of them were, for fourteen days, chained to two long, heavy chains in a dark underground dungeon. Mirza-Abul-Fazl relates that for about six months they received daily news of the plots and intrigues of their enemies, and expected death at any moment, having entirely resigned themselves to the will of God.

After the lapse of twenty-two months, the falseness of the accusations of the enemy was proven to the Shah, and he commanded that the prisoners should be set free.

Released from this rigorous imprisonment, Mirza-Abul-Fazl took up his residence in the village of Gholo-hak, one of the well-known and delightful summer resorts of Teheran, where he remained about seven months, engaged in lecturing and writing. Again the Prince found excuse for his arrest, a third time. He was imprisoned for six months in the royal building named Otake-Nezam (the military department), whence he was released February 5th, 1886.

The purpose of this brief account of Mirza-Abul-Fazl's life and sufferings, is to inform the thoughtful people of this country, concerning the strength of the faith of the adherents of this religion. The full details and circumstances of his experiences are far beyond the limits of this short article. Some of the learned men of Syria and Egypt have written his biography.

For about thirty years, he has been travelling in remote countries. He has journeyed north-

ward through Persia, Turkey, the Caucasus, Tary and Russia, as far as Moscow; eastward as far as the confines of China and Kásh-Kar; to Syria and Egypt; and at the time of this writing, is making a trip through Western Europe and America. During his arduous travels, he has everywhere secured a good name for himself and his countrymen; has consorted with the men of learning of different religions, nationalities and schools; and has acquired a vast range of knowledge which it would be impossible to attain without undertaking extensive and toilsome journeys.

In 1303 A. H. (1886 A. D.), he received the Tablet written by Beha-Ullah in 1300 A. H., in which he is commanded to travel for the purpose of teaching the Word of God; and during his distant journeys, undertaken in compliance with this Command, many holy Tablets were revealed in praise of his strength and fidelity to the Cause.

While travelling, he has written numerous books, being considered a standard writer in ancient and modern Persian, as well as in Arabic. The following statement was made by him in regard to his writings:—

“In the early years of my conversion, I refused to write books, supposing that in the days in which the Supreme Pen was moving, its sound would be heard in all regions. Therefore, I reasoned, it would be a great presumption for a man to attempt writing and composition. Finally in 1887, when in Azerbeyjan, I was favored with the privi-

lege of meeting Wargha the Martyr,* and he encouraged me to write and compose. He said—"During the days when I was at the brilliant city of Akka, and attained the honor of meeting the Blessed Perfection, the Blessed Tongue repeated the Command of the 'First Point,' which was that the believers should each one write books demonstrating the truth of 'He whom God shall manifest.' I inquired if He deemed it advisable to employ Mirza-Abul-Fazl in this service. Then He said:—'As the 'First Point' has commanded it, such persons should employ themselves in writing and propounding arguments.'

"When I heard this statement from his holiness Wargha the Martyr, I ventured to undertake writing. Other believers from all parts, were urging me both verbally and by letters, to write books of explanation and proofs. Therefore in 1888, when I went to the city of Hamadán, one of the great princes there, asked me to work out the date of the Manifestation of the Command of God, from the Koran. As in those days, the Cause of God had penetrated among the Hebrews, and the Jewish Behaïs were widely renowned, one of the learned Jews of Teheran, by name Dr. Mirza-Ayoob, had asked many questions from the Jewish Behaïs of Hamadan, and they requested me to write answers to them. Consequently I wrote a brief treatise in reply to the request of the prince

*The account of the Martyrdom of Miraz-All-Mohammed the poet, one of the staunch Behaïs, with Rouh-Allah his son, is given in the "History of this Movement" which follows this preface. Wargha is the title of this martyr, meaning "nightingale" or "dove."

and the Jewish Behaïs, which book was entitled 'Shar'he-Ayate-Mowarrakhe' (an account of the texts, giving dates). I furnished therein, an interpretation of those verses of the Heavenly Books, in the Old and New Testament, the Koran, the Zend Avesta of the Parsees, which contain indications of the date of the Appearance of the Cause of God. This treatise was written in Persian, and many unrevised copies of it are circulated in Hamadan, etc. The learned Jews have translated into Hebrew that part of it which concerns the Jewish religion, and have spread it throughout Persia."

"A revolt was stirred up against me in Hamadan, through the instigation of the Clergy. I was arrested, confined for five days, and then compelled to leave the city; which prevented me from revising the book. However, in the year 1890, when in Samarkand (Turkistan), I revised it, and manuscript copies were sent to different parts."

"In those years, Ostad-Jawan-Mard, the lecturer of the Zoroastrian College of Yezd, wrote a petition to the Holy Presence of Beha-Ullah, asking various questions. Among other things, he asked concerning the genealogy of Beha-Ullah; for the Parsees, according to the text of their Heavenly Book, except the Greatest Manifestation, the Promised Lord, to appear from Persia and to be of Zoroastrian descent. In answer to this question, Beha-Ullah wrote in a Tablet to him, the following passage:—

“‘Abul-Fazl of Gulpaygan (upon him be My Beha!) hath written upon this subject, from the Heavenly Scriptures, things which are effective in guiding capable, prepared souls.’

“In 1892, this book was sent by Aga-Mirza-Abdul-Kerim of Ardebeel, from Askabad to the Holy Presence of Abdul-Beha, in compliance with His own command. It was approved in the following Tablet written by His own Blessed Hand:—

“‘The treatise containing proofs, written by the pen of that pure soul, was read and noted. We opened our mouth to give thanks for the Favors of the Threshold of Oneness, Who, through the Confirmation of His Kingdom the El-Abha, hath caused such souls to arise for the guidance of all the religions of the world, so that no one among the nations of the world can equal or resist their speech, utterance and the strength of their argument. We thank Him that He hath caused thee to speak His praise, raised thee to explain His argument, demonstrate His proofs and evidences, and to declare His Cause in the Kingdom of His Creation! Were people to possess attentive ears, sound minds, tranquil souls, and pure hearts, this (thy) treatise would be sufficient for them. Verily, I beseech God to make thee a sign of Guidance, a standard of Righteousness, a lamp of Knowledge, a dawning-place of Assurance, a preparer of the Path, a guide to enable people to make straight the road throughout the concourse of existence, and a leader of the hosts of Life, in

the Kingdom of the visible world. Verily, He is the confirmer of whomsoever He willeth! Verily, He is powerful in all things! Upon thee be El-Beha!" 'Abdul-Beha-Abbas.'"

In 1892, Mirza-Abul-Fazl wrote, in Samarkand, the book entitled "Fassl' Ul-Khetab" (conclusive proof), in answer to questions asked by Mirza-Heydar-Ali of Tabriz, one of the learned men of Azerbaijan. This book he wrote in the style of the doctors of theology, and in the introduction is given an account of the controversy in Samarkand between himself and Dr. Marcard Assadorian, a Protestant teacher, in a meeting held by men of learning. In 1898, he wrote the book of "El-Farayed" in Persian, in compliance with the command of our Lord Abdul-Beha. In this work, he answers the objections of Sheikh-Abdus-Salam, entitled Sheikh-El-Islam (a Mohammedan pontiff) of Tiflis. The same year, he wrote the book of "Dorar-Ul-Beheyeh" (the brilliant Pearls), in Arabic, in answer to Dr. Noor-Edin of India.

His other epistles and pamphlets, which are scattered in all parts, are too numerous for mention in this article.

Mirza-Abul-Fazl has a wonderful genius in explaining subtle philosophical points, which skill is his specialty. He himself thinks that he has received this gift as a fulfillment of the prayer which the Blessed Perfection made for him in a Tablet written to Haji-Mohammed-Kazen of Isfahan. It is as follows:—"I beg of God to enable Fazl

(Mirza-Abul-Fazl) to teach His Truth, and to unveil that which is hidden and treasured in His Knowledge, with wisdom and explanation. Verily He is the Mighty, the Bestower!"

One of the theories originated by Mirza-Abul-Fazl, is the "Proof of Stability," in demonstrating the Essence of the Self-existent One; as will be noticed in this book, by discerning minds. This is one of the greatest and clearest logical arguments for proving the Divine validity of the religions and demonstrating the Essence of the Almighty. By a single rational proof, it demonstrates both the existence of God and the truth of the true Prophets. He first propounded this argument in the book of "Fassl-ul-Khetab," in 1892, and for the second time, in the book of "El-Farayed," in 1897.

He is the first one of the Behaïs who has demonstrated by rational and logical arguments, that miracles are not sufficient to prove the truth of the Manifestations of God. He is the first one who has clearly explained the purpose of what was spoken by the Prophets, in the Holy Scriptures, as to the "words being sealed," to be opened at the "last days." For it is said by Beha-Ullah in the Holy Tablets:—"Verily, We have opened the seal of the 'sealed Wine.'" He is also the first to explain that the great religions of the world which have changed and governed the conditions of society, are seven in number; and that the "seven heavens" is a term by which the Prophets have symbolized the Divine Religions. Before Mirza-

Abul-Fazl propounded his theory, the point was not understood, for this number was not spoken of in the Divine Books and Tablets, nor in historical works; so historians had different views upon the subject. Dr. C. Vandyke of America, professor in the University of Beyrout, who has compiled well-known works, has stated in his "Geography," that the principal religions are four in number. Nufel George of Tripoli (Syria), who is one of the noted men of learning, has counted six in his historical work entitled "Soussane-Suleyman" (the "Lily of Solomon"). Likewise the European writers have each stated a certain number which is not sustained by any argument.

Mirza-Abul-Fazl is the first one who demonstrated by rational proofs, why the Pagan religions are considered as polytheism, although they owe their origin to the Almighty, and acknowledge one God. For if by worshipping images, people are to be considered as polytheists, the Greek Church and Roman Catholics must also be considered such, while they are in reality, the "people of the book," and believers in Divine Unity and true Religion.

Mirza-Abul-Fazl has especially asked me to translate the following from his own words, in which he expresses his gratitude for the assistance and help he has received from noble souls:—

"Although this book has been written in compliance with the Command of our Lord Abdul-Beha, who is the Centre of the Circle of Names, the Light shining from the Horizon of Glory and Grandeur, and whose Advent has been announced

in the Books of Prophets and Chosen Ones (Upon Him is Glory, Might and Praise!), yet, were it not for the untiring efforts of the brilliant Pearl, the verdant Leaf, the revered Miss B. (May God increase her honor and excellence!), not one of the pages of my compositions would have been written during this arduous journey. For it is an evident fact to the learned, and notably to those who are writers, that a man of advanced age, and weak constitution, who, in less than one year, has travelled from Egypt to Syria, thence to Europe and America, hurrying from city to city, moving from place to place, addressing meetings two or three times a week, continually speaking to people of different tastes, both ignorant and learned, prejudiced and unprejudiced, would not be able to produce over two thousand pages upon philosophical subjects,—containing explanations of the most intricate and abstruse points, proofs, arguments, and interpretations of Scriptural verses,—were it not for the kind efforts and thoughtfulness of such an excellent soul. She has taken much trouble and labor for the writer, in order that his works may be published.

“Likewise I express my thanks and praise to the revered lady Miss R. (Upon her be Beha-Ullah!). She also has exercised the utmost effort in helping the translation of this book, and has rendered every possible help to the translator.”

Verily, God is Powerful in All Things!

The Servant of Abdul-Beha, ALI KULI KHAN.

April, 1902.

(Ish'te'a'l Ebn-Kalanter).

A short historical and biographical sketch of the leaders of the Bahai Religion, written by the Honorable Mirza-Abul-Fazl, in answer to the request of one of the esteemed Doctors of Chicago, December, 1901.

In the name of our Lord the El-Beha!

It is known to men of learning, that down to the present year, this new Movement, the light of which has penetrated most of the eastern and western countries; this religious belief upon which depends the reformation of the World and the unification of Nations; according to the testimony of the Holy Scriptures, has been founded and upheld by three holy persons. As those who have attempted to write of this Movement, particularly the writers of newspapers and magazines, have mixed up true and false statements, and have colored historical facts with personal prejudices, it is therefore impossible for readers and students to rely upon and profit by their accounts. Even the very sources of their records and the obvious contrast between them, bear testimony of their unreliability. It has therefore been deemed necessary to depict in these pages, a true, substantial and succinct account concerning the birth, fountain-

source and circumstances of these "Three Lights," which cannot be disputed or doubted. With regard to misrepresentations made by prejudiced people concerning certain facts, we leave the exposure of these to the natural and inevitable laws of development and progression; for time and circumstances do not permit the writer to enter into details of proofs and arguments upon all these points. God the Exalted will enable us to accomplish our undertaking.

We preface the subject by saying that religions are distinguished and differentiated from each other by three points. First, by the difference of founders and institutors. For instance, the religions of Zoroaster, Moses, and Mohammed are distinguished and named by three different names, on account of their being founded by these three different personages.

Second, by the difference of the inspired Books of the religions. Thus, the Divine Book of the Zoroastrians is the Zend-Avesta, that of the Jews is the Old Testament, and that of the Moslems is the Koran.

Third, by the difference of laws, ordinances, rites and customs. For instance, as the laws and ordinances of the above religions are different from each other, therefore they are accounted as three religions. In other words, as the devotional acts, rites and beliefs of Christianity are different from those of the Confucianists; and as those of the latter are different from those of the Brahmanas, therefore these are considered different religions

and peoples; otherwise they would all be regarded as one religion and one people.

According to this theory, the writer, in his former works, has shown that the number of the principal religions of the world, which have effected the organization and origin of independent nations, and changed human society, is seven. He has likewise interpreted the "seven heavens" spoken of in Heavenly Books, to be these religions; even though they have all emanated from one Divine Source, all worship one God, and all seek the same attainment of eternal life and salvation. This introductory statement will show men of learning and sagacity the difference between the Behaïs and Babis, and will enable them to distinguish one from the other. For the founder of the Babis was the Great Bab, the "First Point"; while the founder of the Behaïs was the Blessed Perfection, the Greatest Name, Beha-Ullah. The book of the Babis is the Beyan, which was revealed by the Great Bab in the mountain of Maku; while the principal book of the Behaïs is the "Kitabel-Akdas" and Tablets belonging to it, all of which were revealed by Beha-Ullah, after declaring His Mission, in Adrianople and Akka. Likewise, some of the Ordinances of the Bab are rigid and rigorous, in contrast with the benign ordinances of Beha-Ullah, all of which are in conformity with the praiseworthy civilization of the present day, suitable for the preservation of human society, and adapted to the rights and interests of all the eastern and western nations of the world. But, as His

Holiness the Great Bab has announced in His Books and Epistles, the good tidings of the Manifestation of Beha-Ullah, by the name "He whom God shall manifest"; as He has revealed that the appearance of Beha-Ullah would be nine years after His own advent; as He has fixed the date of Beha's declaration and the removal of His own religion to be nineteen years subsequent to (the Bab's) Advent; as He has made His own ordinances and laws dependent upon the will of Beha-Ullah—Who has the right to change or reform them; and as He has used His best efforts and endeavors upon all occasions, to deliver the Message of Beha-Ullah;—therefore we people of Beha recognize that Brilliant Flame to be the true precursor of the Blessed Perfection; know Him to be the Forerunner who prepared the road before the Divine Manifestation, and the first one to establish this Law of God.

After this introduction, we now begin to treat of the lives of each one of these three above-mentioned Lights; while begging God the Exalted for His Confirmation and Assistance.

His Holiness the Great Bab.

The Bab's name was Mirza-Ali-Mohammed. He was born from a distinguished family of the descendants of Mohammed, in the first day of the Arabic month Mohar'ram 1235 A. H. (Oct. 1819, A. D.), in the city of Shiraz, the principal city of Fars, situated in the south of Persia. His father's name was Seyd-Mohammed-Riza, a merchant of woolen goods, in Fars. He died before his son Mirza-Ali-Mohammed was weaned. Therefore his only child was placed in care of a maternal uncle, Haji-Mirza-Seyd-Ali of Shiraz, a man noted for his excellent sanctity, virtue and great piety, and who exercised utmost care in His development and training.

When the Bab reached the age of seven and eight, He was engaged in reading Persian books, under a tutor known as Sheikhi-Moallem, a learned man. This instruction followed the ordinary routine of education which the Persian merchants receive. When He reached maturity, He went into trade, in partnership with His maternal uncle; and afterward, for business purposes, resided at Bushire, situated upon the coast of the Persian Gulf, with another uncle, Haji-Mirza-Seyd-Mohammed.

From His earliest childhood, the Bab was characterized with piety and virtue. He was exceedingly handsome in appearance and of a grave and

venerable deportment. Furthermore, it is the unanimous testimony of both friends and enemies, that He was unequalled in beauty, gravity and politeness, and that He never failed to observe the exact time of prayer, devotion and other religious requirements. He was, in the excellence of His attributes and good qualities, a complete model of human perfection, a standard of refinement and elegance. To prove this fact, it is sufficient to observe that the Shi'ite historians, who, in fabricating falsehood and calumnies, especially when being supported by the Government and people, write the most shameless and scurrilous statements, have not been able to find any flaw in the history of His life. Lacking other material for criticism and abuse, these historians have asserted that His extravagance and persistence in devotions and discipline finally led to the confusion of His mind, and ended in melancholy hallucination.

When He reached the age of twenty-four, the Bab declared before some of the principal men of learning, who were distinguished for virtue and devotion, that God the Exalted had elected Him to the station of Babhood (doorship). He claimed that He had been sent to warn people of the approach of the "time of the end" and of the coming of the Great Hour; to announce to them the descent of the Spirit of God (Christ), spoken of in the Heavenly Books. He read unto them a book which God had revealed from His mouth. Being cognizant of the fact that He had not had any further preparation than the study of

the elementary books taught to children in preliminary schools, these men of learning were amazed to find such an extraordinary knowledge proceeding from Him, and the majority of them believed in the truth of His claim, on account of His great piety and integrity. These were His first believers and became known later as "the Letters of the Living." Each one of these "Letters of the Living," in compliance with the Bab's command, went to different parts of Persia and Turkey, spreading the news of His advent, without mentioning who He was or where He had appeared. In the meantime, the Bab set out for a journey to Mecca and Arabia. In Mecca, He put forward His claim to more than a hundred thousand Mussulmans assembled there at the time of the annual pilgrimage. Therefore the news of His appearance was universally announced, causing a great commotion and disturbance in Persia and in Irak-Arabi. By the title Bab, the Mussulmans understood Him to be a representative of their promised Mahdi, whose coming had been foretold by Mohammed; because the Bab gave people to understand in His discourses and other epistles, that He was the precursor of another who would appear after Him.

After performing the rites of pilgrimage, completing the visit to Mecca and Medina, and fulfilling religious acts of worship, He returned to His native land, and arrived at Bushire.

As the news of the Bab's appearance became widely spread in Shiraz, through the letters for-

warded by the pilgrims of that city from Mecca and Medina, and as the number of His converts increased daily through the fervent endeavors of "the Letters of the Living," the Shi'ite doctors, who then exercised great influence, arose against Him, and persuaded Hussein-Khan, entitled Nizam'Ud-Dawla, the Governor of Fars, a fanatical, tyrannical ruler, exceedingly loyal and obedient to them, to undertake the Bab's suppression and subjugation. He first sent ten horsemen to Bushire to conduct the Bab to Shiraz. They met Him midway between Bushire and Shiraz and escorted Him thither. When He arrived at Shiraz, the Governor called a meeting, to which he invited the prominent clergy of the city, and also summoned the Bab to be present. The Bab declared His mission openly before all the members of the assembly. He claimed that the Lord of the Universe had sent His Door (Bab), and had confirmed Him by causing verses to be revealed from His pen and tongue; that by this manifest proof and weighty miracle, His truth might be proven to the people of the world, and they might be directed to their destination. No sooner had the Mohammedan clergy heard Him mention the word "verses," than they could hardly control their feelings; inasmuch as the founder of their religion had said in the Koran, that were all the men and genii to unite together, or all the people of the world co-operate, they would not be able to produce even one chapter like the Koran. Although the Bab had not studied the Arabic lan-

guage and knew only Persian; and although He was neither a scholar nor scientist, yet He wrote passages in Arabic, similar to the Koran, in answer to their scientific and abstruse questions. Most of them He wrote in their presence, without pause or reflection, not even writing a rough copy first, as is customary with men of learning and literature. Naturally they were astonished at the appearance of such wonders and were unable to answer Him. Finally they were reduced to say that whosoever, after Mohammed, lays claim to any revelation of verses, is an infidel. Consequently the chief among the Shiraz clergy gave verdict that the Bab should be put to death, and the Governor of Fars did not refrain from insulting and striking Him and persecuting His followers. Surety having been furnished by His maternal uncle, Haji-Mirza-Seyd-Ali, the Bab was sent to his house, under strict injunction to hold intercourse with no one. In obedience to this command of the Governor, the Bab secluded Himself and did not admit visitors for some time. Notwithstanding this, His followers continually increased in number, and the news of His virtue and dignity was disseminated throughout all parts of Persia. Meanwhile some of the prominent clergy and men of dignity in Persia, acknowledged His truth, and endeavored to promulgate His cause. Among these were Seyd-Yahya of Darab, the eldest son of Seyd Jawad of Kerbela; and a great number in Teheran, including Beha-Ullah.

Consequently, the clergy of Shiraz again rose in uproar and hostility, accusing the followers of the Bab of having made political claims, and instigating the Governor of Shiraz to murder Him. Then the Governor ordered Abdul-Hamid-Khan, the High Constable, to surround the house of the Bab at midnight, with a number of men, and break into the place. The Constable discovered nothing indicating conspiracy in the Bab's house; in fact found nobody in it except the Bab and one of His followers named Seyd-Kazim of Zenjan. However, he took the Bab to his own house and imprisoned Him there. But at this time, cholera was epidemic in Shiraz, which compelled the Governor and the majority of the chief citizens to flee from the city. Not having discovered anything to fear in the Bab, they released Him upon condition that He should leave Shiraz, lest His presence might stir up the clergy of Fars to make further trouble.

Consequently, the Bab left the city for Isfahan, accompanied by His above-mentioned disciple. In Isfahan He resided in the house of the Imam-Jom'a (a leading clergy), according to the order of Menu-Che'hr-Khan of Georgia, a venerable Christian, who was then the Governor of Isfahan.

Having arrived in the house of Imam Jom'a, He had remained there but thirty to forty days, when the whole city was in a clamor. Multitudes of the prominent students and traders, as well as the general public, visited Him every day, and most of them were astonished at His piety, gravity

and excellence. They were led to confess the fullness of His knowledge and His spiritual power, by the prompt way in which He answered the questions importunately put to Him by men of learning. Therefore the number of His adherents grew in the city of Isfahan, which is the residence of the prominent clergy and the center of learning in Persia.

One thing which greatly astonished the people, was that Menu-Che'hr-Khan, the Christian Governor, who was one of the great statesmen of Persia and renowned for his discernment and intelligence, openly acknowledged the truth of the Bab's mission. Also Mirza-Seyd-Mohammed the Imam-Jom'a, entitled "Sultan' Ul-Ulema" (the Sultan of the Ulema), became devoted to Him. Therefore the other Divines and doctors of Isfahan, who were the most distinguished in Persia on account of their power and influence, made a great uproar against the Bab. The Governor, with the object of exposing the weakness of the clergy and demonstrating the power and virtue of the Bab, gave orders that all should hold a debate and discussion with the Bab, in the presence of himself and the Imam-Jom'a. He commanded that the discussion should be faithfully reported by secretaries and the report sent to the Shah at Teheran, in order that the decision might be left in his hands.

As two of their erudite sages, Aka-Mohammed-Mahdi of Calbass, and the eminent Platonist, Mirza-Hassan of Noor, had once conferred with the Bab, in the presence of the Governor, without

being able to discomfit Him, the Divines refused this discussion and conference, giving as a pretext that it would bring the Mohammedan Law into contempt. At the same time, they unanimously determined to put Him to death.

The Governor, seeing the unanimity of the clergy, and fearing that their influence and authority would cause the Bab's murder, concealed Him in his own quarters and gave currency to a report that He had been sent to Teheran in compliance with the Shah's order; thus for a time, allaying the trouble stirred up by the clergy.

Meanwhile, Manu-Chehr-Khan died, and Gurguin-Khan, his nephew, who was the Vice-Governor of Isfahan, forwarded a petition to Haji-Mirza-Akassi, the Prime Minister, informing him of the death of the Governor, and of the Bab's concealment in the quarters of the government; and asking for instructions regarding the latter. Mohammed Shah, who was personally of a mystic tendency and who entertained no real regard for the clergy, had also heard from unbiased people, the report of the Bab's fame, and of His purity and spiritual attraction, and was willing to see Him. But the Prime Minister, who had been a tutor and teacher of the Shah in his childhood, and for whom the Shah entertained a devoted respect, fearing lest the interview with the Bab might lessen the Shah's respect and esteem for himself, issued a strict command to Gurguin-Khan to disguise the Bab and send Him in charge of Nusseyri horsemen to Teheran.

Accordingly Gurguin-Khan sent the Bab to Teheran. As the city of Kashan is situated between Isfahan and Teheran, the Bab was detained three days there, during which many of the clergy and merchants of the city believed in Him.

When he arrived at the last halting-place before Teheran, the Prime Minister gave a fresh order that He should not be brought to Teheran, but held in the village of Kalin, until the matter had been brought before the Shah's notice. The Bab was detained there about twenty days, during which he forwarded a letter to the Shah, asking for an interview. The Prime Minister prevented this, by pointing out that the Shah was upon the eve of departure to Herat, to wage war with the Afghans and that should the Bab arrive at Teheran, the clergy there would stir up a revolt in the same manner as the clergy of Isfahan had done. He reasoned that it therefore would be advisable to place him in the fortress of Maku, at the borders of Azerbeyjan, until the Shah should return from the conquest of Herat, and look into the matter at his leisure. As Mohammed-Shah was not informed of the real motive of the Prime Minister, he approved this view and wrote a respectful letter with his own hand, to the following effect:—

“Since we are at the point of setting off for a journey, you will now abide for a while in Maku. On our return, we will meet you and the matter will be decided.”

In this letter, he also requested the Bab to pray in his behalf. The Bab was consequently sent to

Azerbeyjan, escorted by Mohammed-Bey the courier, who was a Nusseyrite. Some maintain that the reason why the Prime Minister always placed the Bab in the charge of Nusseyrite mounted guards, was that the latter, not being Mussulmans, and knowing nothing of the Koran, the Traditions, or of the belief in the appearance of the Mahdi and his signs, would not become His converts. Notwithstanding all these precautions, before they had reached the town of Gazwin, which is about 54 miles from Teheran, Mohammed-Bey had become one of the Bab's followers. At the same time, He (the Bab) made many converts in the cities of Gazwin, Abhar and Zinjan, through which He passed on His way to Azerbeyjan. Thus the fame of His appearance was spread in all the provinces of Persia, and every meeting was fired with argument and discussion upon this topic. When the Bab reached Azerbeyjan, He stayed for forty days in the city of Tabriz, but not one of the clergy there conferred with Him. He was then sent to Maku and put in the charge of Ali-Khan; who was the Governor of those districts. Ali-Khan showed Him respect on account of His being a descendant of the Prophet and because of the piety, devotion and gravity which were manifest in Him; but in compliance with the order of the Government, he rarely permitted people to converse with Him. Meanwhile the Bab's religion spread day by day through all parts of Persia, and in every city the numbers of His converts were augmented. Therefore the clergy of Azerbeyjan, like those of

other cities, made a disturbance, and seriously requested the local Government to punish and restrain the Bab and His followers, and remove Him from Maku to a more remote place. The Government in compliance, ordered Him to be removed from Maku to Chih-rik, which is one of the distant fortresses of Azerbeyjan, where He was in charge of Yahya-Khan the Kurd, who exercised the greatest care in guarding Him.

The Crown Prince of Persia, who was afterwards entitled Nassir 'Ud-Din Shah, was, at that time, the Governor of Azerbeyjan. In order to enquire into the matter and silence the clergy, he summoned the Bab back to Tabriz. When He reached Tabriz for the second time, the Crown Prince called some of the prominent clergy to meet the Bab in his presence. A compulsory and unjust discussion and dispute took place. This discussion is recorded by the historians of each side, in a different way; but from the account given by the Bab's opponents, although it is a very inaccurate record, it may be easily discovered that the purpose of the prominent clergy and learned religious doctors of Persia has not been to make a thorough enquiry, but only to dispute in a contemptuous manner, and to deride and threaten Him.

After much clamor and outcry, it was decided to beat and chastise Him. But the Farrashes of the Government refused to carry out this sentence. Therefore Mirza-Ali-Askar the Sheikh 'Ul-Islam of Tabriz, who was one of the prominent Seyds

and doctors, determined to execute this sentence, so he brought Him into his own house, and applied the rods with his own hands. After this, they sent Him for the second time to the fortress of Chihrik; subjected Him to a rigorous incarceration and strictly prohibited people from converse with Him.

In those days, the appearance of the Bab was the chief topic discussed throughout Persia and Irak-Arabi. Consequently, commotion and clamor were continual, and fierce discussions would take place between the Moslems and the Bab's followers. For the Moslem clergy do not deal gently with one whom they consider to be alien to their own religion, no matter who he may be; nor do they converse with him in the spirit of courtesy, respect and humanity. Even in the course of controversy, their words very often are full of contempt and derision, and are reinforced by curses and execrations.

Finally the Persian clergy unanimously decided to eradicate and suppress the Bab and His people. Some of the governors in Persia, being tyrants, ready to plunder and pillage the inhabitants, availed themselves of this decision, and in some parts of Persia, they began immediately to murder and rob the Babis. They even did not refrain from murdering children and women. The local governors and even some of the ministers of the State assisted the enemies of the Babis with regular soldiers, and the political heads joined with the civil chiefs in destroying and suppressing these people. When the late Mohammed Shah died in

1848 A. D., the Crown Prince Nassir 'Ud-Din Shah ascended the Throne, September 10th of the same year. Mirza Taki-Khan of Farahan, entitled Itàbaki-A'zm (the greatest tutor), who was a blood-thirsty and selfish man, attained the position of Prime Minister; a function and title which embodied the greatest dignity of the Government.

Meanwhile, war broke out in three different districts of Persia, between the Mussulmans and Babis. As the clergy had given the sentence to murder and eradicate the Babis, and as some of the local governors were seeking to confiscate their lives and property, the Babis decided to defend themselves, and waged a war of defense against their oppressors in Neiriz (a district in Fars), Zenjan (in Persian Irak), and in the Fortress Sheikh-Tabarsi in the county of Mazanderán. Although the Babi defenders were very few in number, yet the *fighting continued a long time, and the extraordinary valour of the Babis caused their name to be a subject of great awe to the Mohammedans. Therefore, Mirza-Taki-Khan, owing to his lack of administrative capacity, concluded that this revolt would be stopped by murdering the Bab; so without seeking permission from Nassir 'Ud-Din Shah or taking counsel with ministers, he issued the order for His death, to Hamza-Mirza, entitled Hishmat 'Ud-Dawla, the Shah's

*In those days, the Babis fought in defending their lives, according to the Laws of Mohammed, in which extremity, He has allowed religious war. At that time, Beha-Ullah had not declared Himself, and the Book of Akdas, in which He has strictly prohibited warfare, conflict, strife, etc., was not revealed.

uncle, who was at that time the ruler of Azerbaijan. The latter, however, refused to execute the order, and excused himself by speaking of the great virtue and real devotion which he had witnessed in the Bab. He openly stated in a council meeting, that he would prefer to resign his post rather than take part in the Bab's murder. He also ironically said that he expected that the Persian Government would commission him to make war on one of the great empires, but he never expected to be commanded to execute one of the descendants of the Prophet, who had not departed from any of the legal obligatory ordinances of the religion.

After this refusal on the part of the Governor, the Prime Minister issued a second order to his own brother, Mirza-Hassan-Khan, Commander-in-Chief of the army of Azerbaijan, directing him to execute the Bab. The Bab was again conducted to Tabriz, and on the 28th Sha'aban 1266 A. H. (July, 1850 A. D.), they suspended Him with one of His youthful followers, Aga-Mohammed-Ali, who belonged to one of the noble families of Tabriz, against the wall of the old Barrack Square, which is now occupied by traders and artisans. At first, Sâm-Khan the Armenian and an Armenian regiment were in charge of this service. When they fired their volleys, the bullets severed the ropes, without injury to the Bab or to the youth. After the smoke cleared away, they saw the young man standing, and the Bab talking with His amanuensis, Aga-Seyd-Hussein, in a cell, close to the same

wall. They again suspended the Bab and His companion from the same wall, and gave orders to fire. Sám-Khan the Armenian, this time refused to fire, from fright. Another regiment of Azerbeyjan undertook the execution, and made the Bab and Aga-Mohammed-Ali a target for their bullets. This time their bodies were riddled, and both of them died instantly. Then they removed their bodies from the square to the edge of the moat outside the city, and engaged a party of sentinels to watch them.

It is a custom of the oriental nations, especially in Persia, that when a person is executed by order of the Government, his body is exposed for a certain time in sight of the public, so that the people may be intimidated by the sight, and may avoid wrong-doing.

On the second night, the Babis carried away the Bab's body, through the help of the Kalántar (Mayor) of Tabriz. They bore it to a silk-tissue factory belonging to one of the people of Azerbeyjan, where they packed it in a case like a bale of goods, and forwarded it to His Holiness Beha-Ullah in Teheran.

Undoubtedly Mirza-Taki-Khan hoped that the disturbance would be put down, and that this community would be utterly extinguished through the execution of the Bab, whom he considered to be the source of the power of this religion. He had also quenched the fire of battle in a treacherous and disgraceful way. For instance, in Mazanduan, although the number of the Babis did not exceed

three or four hundred, this small number defended themselves over eleven months against twenty-five thousand trained soldiers who were furnished with artillery and perfect weapons. They even made sorties against their enemies, many times overturning their camps and defeating them. Finally, when the Persian Commander was unable to subdue the Babis, he made a treaty with them, stipulating that if they would surrender and cease fighting, he would guarantee their protection and send each one of them to his respective city. For this little Babi army had collected from all parts of the country; brought together by faith in the Bab. Accordingly, the Commander and the Governor took an oath to this effect, confirming it by vows plighted upon the Koran. When the starving Babis yielded (none of them having eaten any food for several days), they were brought into a place where food was prepared. Suddenly, by order of the Governor and General, notwithstanding their oath, the army surrounded and slew all of them with bullets and swords. The affairs of Zenjan and Neyriz terminated in a similar manner, and so the flames of war were extinguished. But the Babi cause did not die away, nor was the fire ignited by the penetration of the Bab's Word, quenched; and each day the number of the Bab's adherents increased. Mirza-Taki-Khan was unable to check the movement, and shortly afterward his tyrannical life came to an end. For the statesmen ceased to support him because he sought to entirely monopolize and dictate the affairs of the Government. The

young King having become cognizant of his secret aims, and offended at the failure of his administrative policy, finally dismissed him from his state positions, and exiled him to the village of Feen, situated within three miles distance from the city of Kashan. About the third or fourth year of the Shah's accession, he was put to death in the bath at Feen, by the royal order.

The Bab wrote many books after He had declared His mission, including a commentary upon the Surat of Joseph in the Koran. This book He entitled "Ah'san-Ul-Kassas" (the best of the stories). At the request of the famous learned Aga-Seyd Yahya of Dáráb, He also wrote, with the most amazing rapidity, a commentary upon the Surat of the Koran, called "Kawthar." Likewise, without meditation, He wrote, in Isfahan, a commentary upon the Surat of Wal'Assr, at the request of the Sultan 'Ul Ulema; and in answer to the wish of Manu-Cheh'r-Khan, the Governor of Isfahan, He produced a book proving "The Especial Mission." In addition to these, He wrote a great many treatises, discourses, prayers, and answers to scientific problems, both in Arabic and Persian, which He named "The Five Styles" and the "Divine Revelation." He silenced and discomfited the Persian Divines by the swift manner in which He wrote and spoke these words. They flowed from Him without any reflection, and He challenged His antagonists either to produce their like or to acknowledge their truth. The greatest book of the Bab is the Persian

"Beyan," written by Him in the mountain of Maku. In it He recorded His new laws and ordinances. This book treats of the qualifications of a Promised One who should appear, of whom the Bab considered himself the Door, and whose name He has given as "He whom God shall manifest," stating that He himself had arisen to announce His Appearance. Following the custom of the Prophets and Divine Messengers, the Bab alluded to the time of His Manifestation by allegories and symbols. In arranging the books revealed from His blessed pen, the Bab has stated in a special chapter concerning the subject:—"Blessed is he who will gaze upon the arrangement of Beha-Ullah, for, verily, He shall inevitably appear."

In the Beyan, He has changed all the laws and rites, and instituted special ordinances for devotional acts, ceremonies and usages. He changed the lunar system formerly held by the Persians, into the solar reckoning of the year, which He divided into nineteen months of nineteen days, and has named each one of the days of the year after the names and attributes of God. He also gave new names to the days of the week. In writing the name of any of His prominent adherents, in His Epistles, He would make it conform with the numerical value of one of the names of God and would write it at the head of the letter. This He did without meditation and in an astonishing manner. For instance, the numerical equivalent of the name Rab (Lord) is 202, which corresponds with Ali-Mohammed; the name Dayyan (65), with

Assad (the name of Mirza-Assadullah of Khoy); the name Waheed, with Yahya (Aga-Seyd-Yahya of Darab), etc. Therefore He called each one of them Ism 'Ullah (the Name of God), and even till the present day, this word has remained a title of the companions of the Bab.

His Holiness Beha-Ullah.

The next Light is Beha-Ullah, son of Mirza-Abbas, renowned as Mirza-Bozork of Noor. The Nooris are one of the well-known families of Mazanderan. During the reigns of Kadjar the present Persian Dynasty, the members of this family have usually occupied the highest positions in the state, such as Prime Minister, Minister, Secretary, and other civil and military dignities. Even in the present day, most of them are in the Government. Some have retired from their positions, but their names are enrolled upon the financial and military staff.

Beha-Ullah was born in Teheran, on the 2nd day of the month Moharram 1233 A. H. (Nov. 1817 A. D.). When He reached the age of eight and nine years, the marks of great distinction and sagacity were already manifest in Him. He was not instructed nor taught by anybody. Apparently He had acquired the elements of Persian reading and writing from His father and other near kinsmen. In His youth, His father, who was one of the ministers of the state, died, and the charge of His brothers and sisters, who were all younger than Himself, fell upon Him. He did not care to enter any of the Government services, but provided sustenance for the whole family through the management of His inherited lands and properties. When the Bab appeared in Shiraz, Beha-Ullah, who was

about twenty-seven years of age, publicly accepted His claim, and endeavored to the utmost to promote the word of the Bab both in Teheran and Mazanderan, especially among the principal clergy. He spent some time at Noor, the home of the Noori family, furthering the advance of the Religion, and while there, had remarkable discussions with the religious doctors, so that the renown of His knowledge and the power of His reasoning raised an excitement among the leading men of those districts. By this, many were led to embrace the Religion, while others were stirred to jealousy and insolence.

After He had resided and travelled in the different districts of Mazanderan, He returned to Teheran, where He continued to spread the principles of the religion and spiritual teachings, supporting and encouraging the Babis, until the attempt against the life of Nasser Ud-Din Shah happened. The substance of this event is as follows:—A young man of Tabriz, Mohammed Sadek by name, who was a servant of one of the prominent Babis, and devotedly attached to his master, became depressed and bereft of reason on account of the martyrdom of the latter. Having made up his mind to blood-revenge, he divulged this secret to one of his confidential friends whom he knew to be one of the stanch believers in the Bab. These two went to Teheran, concealing their intention from all their friends and even from the Babis. As the Shah was out of the city, sojourning among his country resorts at Shamiran, they directed

their steps toward the village of Niavaran. On Sunday, 15th August, 1852 (1268 A.H.), they were in the vicinity of the village, near the Royal Palace, with the intention of carrying out their plot. When the Shah went out to ride, Mohammed Sadek advanced, and fired a pistol at him. The shot missed its mark, as the horse bolted, and the Shah being much agitated, fell off his horse and fainted. The attendants rushed forth, picked up the Shah, and slew Mohammed Sadek on the spot. As he was killed instantly, he could not be questioned as to what led him to commit this abominable act, and as to who had been his associate. But as he had been a servant of one of the prominent Babis, that community was unjustly accused of the deed, and notwithstanding they knew nothing whatever of this plot, they were arrested and fell victims to the wrath of the revengeful Shah. Eighty of them were seized in Teheran, and given up separately to a different class of people to be executed. The administrators deemed it advisable to have each one of these victims murdered by one section of the citizens, and thus sow hatred and enmity between the different classes of Shi'ites and the Babis. By this means they sought to prevent the spread of the Bab's religion. Consequently they distributed the helpless Babis to various parties of people; one to the book-keepers, one to the soldiers, one to the learned doctors, one to the merchants, carpenters, blacksmiths, drapers; even the shoemakers, cobblers, rice merchants, etc. Each one of these classes slew its victim as they chose. Some

were cut lengthwise alive; some blown from mortars, and some chopped into pieces. The Kadjar youths of Astrabad, in order to try the strength of their arms, cut their unfortunate captives into halves with their swords. Among them, one who died in an incredibly horrible manner, was Suleyman-Khan the son of Yaha-Khan of Tabriz, who was a most devoted follower of the Bab. When the order was issued for his execution, they first stripped him, and made holes in his body with knives. In these holes they placed lighted wax-candles, put a halter through his nose and paraded him around the markets of Teheran. When a candle burned down to his flesh and was consumed, they would put another one in its place. Bystanders were watching the scene and following in great crowds; while he was silent and patient, not evincing the least trace of agitation; nor did he groan or plead for mercy, which is the natural tendency of man under such circumstances. Nay, he expressed great joy and cheerfulness, with a shining face, while singing and chanting verses of yearning, so that the hard hearts of the bystanders were affected with emotion, and all the inhabitants of Teheran, both old and young, were astonished. Finally, after this torture, they cut him in half lengthwise, and hung the two parts upon either side of the old city gate of Abdul-Azim. It is said that when the matter waxed so frightful, the Imam Jomá (chief leader of prayer) of Teheran, conferred with the Shah and blamed him for these outrages. Some state that one of the foreign Ambassadors

warned the Shah that should another Babi victim show forth such steadfastness at the time of his execution, half of the people would embrace Babism, after which, checking the matter would be extremely difficult. The Shah therefore prohibited the taking of any action against the Babis without investigation; but since that time, the justice awarded to these devoted people has been similar to that given by the Council of the Inquisition to the heretics in Rome. In fact, a man's acknowledgment of Babism, before the Government, was considered as confessing the greatest crime, which should be punished with death, no matter how high a character or what qualifications of virtue and sanctity he possessed. Very often the finding of a Babi Book in a person's possession, his conversing or dealing with the Babis, or pleading for one accused of Babism, would be considered as a crime by the clergy. Many a time, if they found in the pocket of an accused one a torn piece of paper bearing the words "Allaho Abha" ("God is glorious"), or the name Beha or Bab, they needed no further witness to prove his infidelity.

One of the men arrested and imprisoned was the blessed person of Beha-Ullah. He was in the village Afcha, one of the surrounding districts of Teheran. When the report of the attempt upon the Shah's life came to Him, He, knowing that the prominent Babis had no connection with the matter, rode forth with perfect composure to Niya-varan. Immediately after His arrival, He was arrested, imprisoned, and chained for about four

months in the gaol of Teheran. After a strict examination and enquiry, it was finally proven that He had no connection whatever with the criminals, and that He knew nothing of the matter. The Shah therefore ordered that He should depart to Irak Arabi, and abide in the holy sanctuaries of the Shi'ite Imams (Kerbela, Nejef and Baghdad), which are places of exile for the men of distinction of Persia. Accordingly, in the year 1269 A. H. (1852 A. D.), he departed to Irak, escorted by some of the delegates of the Persian Government, and took up his residence at Baghdad.

The majority of the Babis and some others believe, that when it was proven that Beha-Ullah did not know Mohammed Sadek, the Russian Ambassador interceded for Him and effected His release. They have even recorded that when Beha-Ullah set off for Baghdad, accompanied by the horsemen of the Government, the Russian Ambassador also sent one of his attendants, to guard Him, lest the Persian delegates might seek to take His life on the way. This does not seem to be a confirmed fact, for the Russian Ambassador had only testified to the purity of Beha-Ullah's character, and had never made any intercession or interference in His behalf. But unquestionably, the testimony of the Russian Ambassador in praise of Beha-Ullah was used by Mirza-Aga-Khan, the Prime Minister, as a means to silence the Shah, and persuade him to issue the order for the release of Beha-Ullah. The real cause of His deliverance was that it was con-

clusively proven to the Shah that Beha had no share in the plot against him.

In these days, the Babis were in a very confused and depressed condition. On one hand, the persecutions inflicted by the clergy and statesmen, and, on the other hand, the calumnies invented by people against them, had made them so suspected and hated by the people, that most persons refused to have any communication with them; nay rather, their suppression was considered a religious duty. The deeds and actions of most of the Babis were considered entirely contrary to the usual customs of the public; while the bad management of some of their ignorant chiefs caused many evil deeds to be attributed to them. If a censurable action was committed by one of the Babis, it would be equally attributed to all of them, for they had no power to defend themselves against the calumny, owing to the violent persecutions of their enemies. Thus the good were not distinguished from the bad. Since the Bab had, in every book, announced the approach of the Great Manifestation, a number of the Babis, among whom were Seyd-Ala in Irak, Haji-Mirza-Musa (the chief custodian of the Holy Shrine) in Kome, Haji-Molla Hashem of Nerag in Kashan, and Mirza-Assadullah, entitled Day'yan, in Azerbeyjan, insolently put forward claims, and each gained the allegiance of a certain number of Babis, thus subdividing the community into different sects. This division and difference of beliefs also gave rise to unseemly acts, and increased the accusations against the Babis, causing people to

hate them. The most prominent among these claimants, was Mirza-Yahya, whom the Bab, in His Tablets, addressed by the title Ismullah 'El-Ezel (the name of God, Ezel). Although he claimed to be the representative of the Bab, yet in his writings, termed "epistles," which were spread among his followers, he put forward the most exalted claims of divinity, and considered his own words as Heavenly Revelation. Most of the Babis believed in him and recognized him as their aim. He frequently travelled in disguise and concealment; sometimes in the garb of dervishes, sometimes in the costume of traders or Arabs. Some believe that the appointment of Mirza-Yahya as a successor, had been decided between the Bab and Beha-Ullah; because, in the beginning of Nasser' Ud-Din-Shah's reign, the object of Mirza-Taki-Khan was to arrest the original source of this movement, and stop the water at the fountain-head. Therefore, after consulting together, they made Ezel appear as the Bab's successor, through Mirza-Abdul-Karim of Kazwin, who was employed to manage and forward the Epistles of the Bab. In this manner they preserved the Center of the Cause, Beha-Ullah, from the interference of Mirza-Taki-Khan.

But according to the author's belief, it was the appearance of different claimants from various places which kept Him from being recognized as the Center of this Community, and protected Him from the interference of the Prime Minister; and

that thus the source of this movement was concealed.

To be brief; when Beha-Ullah arrived at Baghdad, the center of the Irak province, He found the Babis in a confused condition. They were a small multitude, like sheep without a shepherd, dispirited, divergent in thoughts and ideas. They had no leader to bring them into unity of ideas, no record of good deeds by which they might attract the hearts of people, no security or assured safety which would enable them to employ themselves in earning their living, no organization or numbers to silence their enemies, and no money or riches to enable them to travel. There was no brilliant leader among them, to light their way with a lamp of guidance, through their gloomy conditions. No rightly directed sympathizer had appeared to bring back to the path of peace those wanderers who were far from righteousness and salvation.

To sum up; they found in Beha-Ullah's face the Light of Guidance, and read the verses of Deliverance from the book of His character; so they severed themselves from all and joined Him. He determined to elevate their character, reform their deeds, and transform their weakness into strength and uprightness, through His beautiful speech and righteous example. In a short time, as a result of His admirable training, their weakness changed into power, their inharmony into unison, their evil habits into good deeds and their numbers also largely increased. At the same time, their evil repute changed into good

report, while the hatred and unsociability of outsiders changed into friendship and affection toward them. The learned men of Baghdad opened their mouths in praising Beha-Ullah, and the leaders of that land were persuaded to converse with the Babis. But these circumstances produced hostility among some of the Babi chiefs, who put forward claims of leadership, until their jealousy far exceeded the enmity of the outsiders.

In order to quench this interior fire of dissension, Beha-Ullah decided to go into exile. Without having divulged His purpose to friends or relations, He departed toward Kurdistan. He remained for a short while in Suleymaniyyé, but for the greatest part of the time lived in the mountains of Sarkalu, in that district. This exile and seclusion lasted nearly two years. Finally, after great search, some of His principal companions ascertained the place of His retirement. Having reasoned that a continuance of His separation from them would result in dispersion and disintegration of their number and reduce their power to weakness, they hastened to Him and succeeded in gaining His consent to return with them. On His arrival at Baghdad, the hearts which were restless in His absence became tranquilized, and the power and penetration of His Word became more manifest. From all parts of Persia and Arabia people sought His Presence, and were benefited by the copious shower of His Utterances. Then, returning to their countries, they brought other souls to

acknowledge Him, and greatly exerted themselves to promote His Cause.

In a short time, the number of His followers was greatly multiplied, and all hearts were filled with respect for them, until their fame became widely spoken by other nations, and the record of their lives and circumstances was considered important by writers and historians. Now the jealousy and hostility of the clergy of Irak began to be aroused. The cities of Kerbela, Nejef, Kazemeyeh, and Samereh, the most famous in Irak, are the important centers of the Shi'ite sect. Here the tombs of most of the twelve Imams, who are the leaders and examples of the Shi'ites, are located. Each year, vast numbers wend in pilgrimages to these sanctuaries, from Persia, India, Yemen, and other countries. Moreover, these cities are the headquarters of learning, centers whence the Persian divines secure their certificates of religious law. Therefore the prominent Shi'ite doctors reside at Kerbela and Nejef; men celebrated for their influence and prominence in public esteem among the Shi'ites in general, and respected by them in all parts of the world.

When the doctors of Irak realized the effectiveness of the word of the Babis, and especially the influence of Beha-Ullah, they assembled together under the leadership of Sheikh-Abdul-Hussein the Mujtahid, and determined to suppress them. But the most distinguished and respected divine, Sheikh-Murtaza Ansâri refused to ally himself with their plan and withdrew from their

party.* Finally they appointed one of the doctors, and sent him as an envoy to Beha-Ullah. When this envoy returned from Baghdad, a manifest emotion was visible in him, for his heart was filled with respect and reverence toward Beha-Ullah and His Cause.

Briefly, he reported to the doctors that the truth concerning Beha-Ullah and His community was exactly contrary to what they had imagined or believed; and that He was a veritable sea, boundless and overflowing with knowledge. He also stated that Beha-Ullah was ready to confer at any time with the divines and the public, in order to elucidate and demonstrate the truth of His teaching, furnishing them decisive proofs and solid arguments. If the erudite doctors were not satisfied with mere scientific controversy, seeking heavenly proofs and a Divine Sign, He was ready to furnish, on this appointed occasion, whatever the doctors should unanimously desire; and thus to end the matter.

The doctors fled from His challenge, and shunned this proof, for their purpose was not to discover the reality of the fact, and distinguish truth from falsehood, but to threaten and abase the Babis, and thus prevent the propagation of their religion. Through the report of this deputation, however, their aim was frustrated, and the majority among them were disappointed. Therefore the reverend doctors occupied themselves in hatching a new plot and sought the help of ad-

*A fuller account of this meeting is given later in the book.

ministrative officials. So they opened communication and correspondence with the Ambassador residing at Constantinople and with the statesmen at Teheran, until finally, at the request of the Persian Government, an order was issued from the Turkish Government, summoning Beha-Ullah to Constantinople, and the Governor of Baghdad forwarded the order to Beha-Ullah.

In compliance with this order, Beha-Ullah left Baghdad on the evening of a day in April, 1862 A. D. (2nd of the month Zul-Ka'da, 1279 A. H.), and remained for twelve days at the garden of Najib Pasha, the former Governor of Irak. This period of "twelve days" is regarded by the Behaïs as the "Most Great Feast," and considered as the days of the Manifestation of Beha-Ullah. It is said that during these days, Beha-Ullah declared His Mission before His notable followers, strictly commanding and exhorting them to be patient, self-restrained, steadfast, forbearing, striving to beautify their characters and reform their morals. He assured them that if they continued to practise these virtues, they would be assisted by the Divine Confirmation. After the lapse of the twelve days, He departed for Constantinople via Mosul, accompanied by some of His servants and followers. Ezel, who had travelled in disguise with a band of Bedouin Arabs, joined Him at Mosul. From here they went on to Constantinople via Samsoon, and resided at the quarters appointed for them by the Turkish officials. After a few days they were moved to another abode,

where they stayed four months. During His residence there, Beha-Ullah did not pay a visit to the Minister of Foreign Affairs or the Prime Minister, and asked no assistance or protection from the civil and administrative chiefs. The Persian Ambassador utilized this to poison the minds of the Turkish statesmen against Him, and make false accusations. Shortly afterward, an order was issued by the Turkish Government, that Beha-Ullah and His followers should reside at Adrianople, one of the Turkish cities most remote from Persia. They remained in Adrianople about five years.

While in Adrianople, His mission obtained great celebrity and His Message was widely spread. The majority of the Babis acknowledged Him and became known as Behaïs. Consequently the fire of jealousy against Beha-Ullah flamed in the hearts of the Shi'ites and the remaining Babis. The leading followers of Ezel agreed with the chief Shi'ites to antagonize the Behais, and prejudiced the high officials of Turkey against this community by all kinds of plots and intrigues. Finally, one day, the soldiers, acting under orders of the Porte, besieged the house of Beha-Ullah, preventing everybody from entrance or exit. It is said that the Behaï Household was without water for drinking and other requirements three days. Some supposed that an order had been issued from the Porte to destroy all of them. As the inhabitants of Adrianople, both Christians and Mussulmans, had witnessed for five years the excellence, greatness and

compassion of Beha-Ullah, crowds of them gathered around the house, weeping loudly. The Christians, in whom the fire of sympathy had been especially enkindled, wept more bitterly than the rest. One of the confirmed facts is that during this period, Beha-Ullah clearly foretold to Omar-Aga, one of those who were commanded to banish Him, the future events of the Ottoman Government, such as the deposition of the late Sultan Abdul-Aziz, and the subsequent revolt. He has clearly named in numerous Tablets, the particulars of these events, such as the Tablet of K. Z., addressed to Sheikh Kazem Samandar of Kazwin.*

Then, in accordance with the command of Sultan Abdul-Aziz, an order was issued by the Ottoman Prime Minister, banishing Beha-Ullah, His Household and some of His followers and servants, to the city of Akka in Syria; a city well-known in those days, for its evil climate, and a place of exile for the suspects of the Government.

Accordingly they left Adrianople on the 20th of Rabi 'Us-Sani 1285 A. H. (Aug. 1868 A. D.), and arrived at Akka on the twelfth Jamadi-Ul-Ula (Sept.) of the same year. The Behaïs believe that this banishment fulfilled the Divine prophecies in connection with the Holy Land. The glad tidings given by the Israelitish Prophets concerning the Manifestation of the Glorious Lord, was thereby realized, and the time had come for the promised emancipation of the children of Abraham from their long degradation and violent shame.

*These Tablets were written in Adrianople in 1863, about eight years before the prophecies made in them were fulfilled.

When Beha-Ullah and His followers arrived at Akka, they first resided for about two years, at the military barrack, which is a fortress built of rocks. They afterward dwelt in houses situated within the city.

The fortified city of Akka is so ancient, that the "Crusades," which lasted two hundred years, are but modern events in connection with its history. The stones scattered round about it are as the dust of woeful calamities, which the hand of time has strewn over the heads of unfortunate victims; its turbid water like the blood of humanity poured by Fate into the cup of the affliction of its inhabitants.

In the year 1312 A. H. (1894 A. D.), when the author resided in that district, he was accustomed to walk for recreation in the plains of Akka, which, in the spring time, are filled with flowers and myrtles. Looking upon them, the past rose up in vivid retrospect. In the red anemones, he saw the rosy-cheeked legions who had carpeted the earth with their devoted bodies and drenched the soil with their life-blood. In the yellow tulips, were faces of youthful warriors grown sallow and sickly in hardships and long marches over hot, burning sands; while the pure, beautiful white flowers were the lilies and jasmines of beloved and devoted souls who had brightened the earth for a short time by their evanescent beauty and purity. Meditating in this way, he noticed a cave close by the Talli-Fakhâr (the potter's hill), filled with mouldering bones of the slain which had been thrust into

such holes and left there as a warning to posterity. As he looked at this grim object-lesson of the past, he said, in pensive retrospection:—"O Abul-Fazl! these relics which have remained as a memorial of bygone peoples, are the best proof of the hardness of the hearts and the evil thoughts of former generations." "Even those who do not believe in Divine Revelation and Laws, must testify to the superiority of Beha-Ullah, and to the advantage of following His Religion; inasmuch as He has not only forbidden warfare, but even prohibited His followers from conflict, dispute and assault. He has entirely abolished bloodshed from religion. He has called the world one native-land, and all the people thereof, leaves of one tree, so that the fanaticism of the ignorant may be blotted from memories, and the hostility resulting from difference of races may be removed from minds. Henceforth the people may not use the Divine Religions which the Prophets have instituted for unity and harmony, as a means for destruction and discord, and may not take the holy ordinances enacted for harmony and love, as pretexts for fighting and bloodshed."

Absorbed in this reflection, he suddenly realized that the dust of jealousy has sown corrupt seeds of discord even in this Divine Garden; and has planted the tares of dissension and disunion in the field of the Behai union and harmony. Therefore he became ashamed, disheartened and sorrowful, but soon the verdure of hope grew up from the field of desire; for he saw that the Most Great Spirit of

God (Christ) has chanted this glorious Melody in the texts of the Gospels; that at the harvest of the world, the Divine reaper will gather the tares and will burn them in the inextinguishable fire of wrath, while the good grain he will gather into barns. In other words, the discords created by the "violators" (those who violated the Covenant of Beha-Ullah, by disobeying the Center of the Covenant Abdul-Beha) will be removed through the power of the Firm Covenant of God, and the darkness of disunion will be dispelled by the rise of the lights of the Day-Spring of the Testament.

Thus the matter hath been decreed and decided! Although the calamities and afflictions suffered by the Blessed Perfection during His stay in Akka, were beyond the endurance of man, yet, through the providence of God and His assistance, these torrents of disaster did not prevent Him from reforming the character of His followers, and the assault of hardships and grievances did not stop the spread of His Teachings. For the tribulations of Beha-Ullah were not only confined to the contradictions of the tyrannical clergy, or the calumnies of fanatical Divines. Nor were His sufferings caused only by the injustice of statesmen and the covetousness of rulers, who accounted oppression of strangers and showing hostility towards those outside their faith, as a religious duty. It was a greater task to beautify the character of His own people, than to defend Himself against exterior enemies. Guarding His followers from committing unseemly actions was

more difficult than enduring the persecutions of the outsiders. For these people who had just embraced the Behaī religion were formerly Babis, and during the time of "Fatrat" (interval between two prophets or the time between the martyrdom of the Bab and the rise of Beha-Ullah) they had frequently departed from the limit of moderation, owing to the evil training of different leaders. Thus they had grown to consider many censurable actions as allowable and justifiable, such as disposing of men's property and pillaging the defeated. This latitude and laxity of principle likewise extended to the conflict and bloodshed permitted by their former religion, Islam. The Babis generally were ignorant of the ordinances of the Bab, and supposed them to be similar to the doctrines of the Shi'ites, which they considered the source of the Babi religion. This ignorance was due to the fact that the Babis were strictly prohibited by the Persian rulers from holding intercourse with or visiting the Bab, while the latter was in prison. Thus they had been deprived of the opportunity of seeing Him and receiving instruction in His laws and ordinances. Warfare and pillage were absolutely violations of the fundamental basis of the Religion of Beha-Ullah, which was established for the express purpose of spreading universal brotherhood and humanity. It was a supernatural deed to reform the character and morals of a community, all the members of which were scattered in different cities and countries. For when the Bab appeared, the Mohammedans in general,

particularly the Shi'ites of the "Church of the Twelve," were looking with all earnestness of soul for the appearance of the promised Mahdi, whom they supposed would be the promoter of their laws. Although the prominent and learned among the Shi'ite clergy of Persia joined the circle of the Bab's followers, yet His cause did not penetrate any other religion. Nor was it embraced by the people of any other country, except Irak Arabi, which can scarcely be considered foreign, on account of the Shi'ite Imams situated there, and of the considerable number of Shi'ites residing in it! When Beha-Ullah appeared, however, it was but a short time before His followers became noted for their good deeds and just characters. As a result of His training, they soon became successful in promoting His Word, rendered spiritual assistance to His cause, and were grounded in admirable religious beliefs. Day by day, His followers increased in number and the power of His Word became more and more manifest, so that in a short space of time it was introduced into other countries and penetrated other religions besides Islam. Even the Jews, Zoroastrians, Nusseyrtes and other remote peoples who were considered as being absolutely extinct and lifeless, attained, by thousands, the honor of accepting His Cause. For this they fell victims to the tyranny and persecutions of the Moslems and their own former co-religionists; quaffing the cup of martyrdom with joy, steadfastness, triumph and forbearance. This was a matter of astonishment to sagacious

men, for these people were many in number and belonged to the rich classes; numbers of them were merchants and traders, and thus could not be supposed to have embraced Behaism in order to gain riches or fame. For the followers of Beha-Ullah did not possess any wealth, affluence or material power which might induce people to join them. Moreover, after embracing this religion, they showed such steadfastness, that no fear of losing their lives and property could shake their faith. Therefore the Behaïs recognized this firmness, forbearance and endurance of calamities to be a proof of the truth of this religion, and as the most manifest evidence and witness of the power of the Word of Beha-Ullah.

After His arrival at Akka, Beha-Ullah avoided holding intercourse with the general public, except persons who were especially desirous of visiting Him. This gave Him time for writing answers to myriad questionings of people and also prevented the enemy from inventing calumnies and accusations against Him. He charged His eldest son, named after His grandfather Mirza Abbas, and who is also entitled the "Greatest Branch of God," to hold intercourse with the people. For nine years after He moved from the fortress, He did not go out of the house where He resided; nor during this time did He go for a recreation to the gardens outside the walls of Akka. Later on, He sometimes went to a garden belonging to Him, situated outside the city. Finally He left Akka and lived in a building situ-

ated near the village Behji, and belonging to one of the wealthy men of that city. A few years before His departure, He visited Haifa, Mt. Carmel, and also a convent built by the monks of the Carmelite order, just above Elijah's cave. In this convent, He rested for more than an hour, and while there one of His Holy Tablets was revealed from His blessed pen. From that time on He stayed each year for a period at Haifa, where the Behaists of different sects, religions, and lands, visited Him. There they partook of the table of His generosity and became filled with the pure water of the sea of His knowledge. Finally, Beha-Ullah departed to the Everlasting World and ascended to the Supreme Horizon, on the 2nd day of the Arabic month, Zulka'da 1309 A. H. (May 28th, 1892). On the day of His Departure, all the inhabitants of Haifa, Akka and neighboring places, assembled together in the presence of His eldest son,—the "Greatest Branch of God,"—and interred His remains, with extraordinary respect, close to the Mansion of Behji, which is situated a short distance from Akka.

The Books, Tablets, and Divine Revelations of Beha-Ullah, contain treatises, written generally in answer to questions asked by people, both Behaïs and outsiders. For during His stay in Irak, Adrianople and Akka, when His Name had become renowned in the world, and the penetration of His Word attracted the attention of intelligent minds, the Seekers after Truth, who were

earnest in the search of knowledge and wisdom, went to Him, asking intricate and abstruse questions. Those who were not able to visit Him on account of the strict prohibition of rulers and other obstacles, asked Him difficult questions through correspondence. He answered them instantly without delay or hesitation, although subject to rigorous calamities and afflictions. These answers were forwarded after a copy of them had been reserved. Chief among the questioners were the Babis, who had believed in Him. They, as already explained, had been prevented from receiving instructions from the Bab, on account of the strict prohibition of the Government, and were not informed of His laws. He also wrote certain Tablets which He sent to the crowned heads and to the chief religious doctors and divines. Thus, in a short time, His books and epistles were scattered like rose-petals throughout different cities, and the teachings given therein were poured forth like unto raindrops over all regions. So the voice of His Manifestation reached the West and East like a flash of lightning and His Cause penetrated other countries and nations. Some of the Tablets He wrote in Modern Persian, while others written in answer to the learned and leading Zoroastrians, are in pure Old Persian. Some He has written in eloquent Arabic and others in ordinary Arabic of to-day, so that they may be comprehended by the common people. All of them are in the most graceful and elegant style, and although written without premeditation or re-

flection, are nevertheless in the most excellent form of composition. Historians have stated the number of these Tablets to be over one thousand, but this computation and estimate is mere guesswork and approximation, for though numerous volumes of the Tablets of Beha-Ullah are already published, a still larger quota has not yet been collected and compiled. Not until all of them have been collected, will their number be accurately known. According to His own statements in the Tablets themselves, Beha-Ullah said that the Tablets revealed from His Pen, are equivalent to all the Heavenly Books of the extant religions of the world. This is one of the proofs and evidences of the Truth of His Mission. The Epistles and Treatises of Beha-Ullah contain four different styles and classes of knowledge. Upon the understanding of these depends, as is believed by the Behaïs, the knowledge of the Truth of all the Divine Religions. Without this understanding man cannot be thoroughly informed of the benefits of religion, nor can ideal refinement and civilization be realized. Some of them contain laws and regulations whereby the rights and interests of all the nations of the world can be perpetuated, for these statutes are so enacted that they meet the necessities of every land and country and are acceptable to every man of intelligence. In this universality they resemble the laws of Nature, which secure the progress and development of all peoples; and they will bring about universal union and harmony. The most

important and best known among these is the "Book of Akdas" and its supplementary Tablets, revealed in answer to questions asked concerning the texts of Akdas; also the Tablets of "Ishrakat," "Tarazat," etc. To this class belong the Tablets written upon the conduct of the "ascetic" seekers and strivers after truth. Such is the Book of the "Seven Valleys," written in answer to Sheikh Abdul Rahman of Kerkoot, one of the prominent Sufi Sheikhs of Irak Arabi. Although Beha-Ullah has forbidden Sufism, Monkhood and inactivity, i. e., abandoning the practice of trade and profession, yet, in these Tablets, He has explained the manner of real devotion. Some others contain solutions of the intricate points of the Heavenly Books of former peoples, which, before His Manifestation, were sealed by the seal of the Prophets; God having decreed that their opening and interpretation should be effected at the Day of the Lord's Appearance. As the learned attempted to interpret them before the appointed time, they fell into error in apprehension of their real purport, and thus misled people instead of enlightening them! The Behaïs believe that this very point caused the Jews to falsely deny our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Zoroastrians to consider all the Israelitish prophets as impostors. The Behaïs also believe that former interpretations of the Book are but false imaginations of man, and inversions of the Divine Word. To this class of His writings belong the well-known book of "Ighan" and the Book entitled "Jawahir

'ul As'rar" ("Gems of Mysteries"), revealed in Baghdad at the request of one of the nobility of Fars; in which He has opened the seals of the former prophetic books. Some others contain prayers and divine eulogies, which instruct men in the mode of worship; supplications and communes, which are means of communion between the worshipper and the Adored One. The benefits imparted by such devotional acts are the illumination and purification of man's conscience, by which the faculty of Divine Apprehension is strengthened, the brutal qualities of man are refined and the worshipper attains true realization and certainty. Some others contain discourses and exordiums in which He has explained the real meaning of the Unity of the Divine Essence and has demonstrated and elucidated the original purpose of the mission of prophets, as well as the stations of the separation and union of those dawning places of the Command of God. In other words, in these Tablets, Beha-Ullah has solved intricate theological questions in the clearest way, whereby He not only has demonstrated the truth of the new Cause, but also the truth of the founders of former religions. In this connection, M. Gabriel de Sassy, one of the noble Christians of Cairo, made the following statement in a speech delivered by him before an assembly of learned men in Paris, during the Exposition of 1901:—

"When the Behaïs wish to make a convert to their religion, they endeavor from the very first to

confirm him in his own religion, thus enabling him to become cognizant of the principal proofs whereby the Divine religions are demonstrated and to distinguish a Prophet from an impostor. Consequently, the Old Testament of the Behaïs consists of all the Heavenly Books revealed through the former Prophets, while their New Testament comprises the Tablets of Beha-Ullah, which in fact reconcile these books and contain the interpretation and explanation of them!"

The meaning of M. de Sassy's statement is, that what makes a people deny the Manifestation is necessarily their ignorance of the real proofs and arguments. Because of this ignorance the Jews denied Christ; and the Zoroastrians and Hindoos rejected Moses, Christ, and other prophets. To sum up; during the interval between the time of His Holiness Beha-Ullah at Baghdad and His Departure at Akka, four rivers of knowledge flowed from His swift Pen, without which the religions of the world could not be developed and refreshed, and the Tree of Union and harmony would not have been planted in the Greatest Paradise. The writer believes that the four rivers spoken of in the former Heavenly Books as flowing out from the Divine Throne in the Garden of Eden, signify these four styles. For the spiritually-minded realize that the Spirit of God can only be manifested through the Holy Temple of Man, and therefore, to them, the rivers flowing from this great Throne to water all the regions of the world, are none other than rivers of spiritual knowledge.

During Beha-Ullah's residence at Baghdad, it was His custom to write the Tablets with His own hand; but in Adrianople they were usually written by the Pen of His Eldest Son, the "Greatest Branch of God." During the exile at Akka they were dictated to different amanuenses, including Mirza Aga Jan of Kashan (the servant of Beha-Ullah), Mirza Mohammed Ali, Mirza Ziá 'Ullah, Mirza Badi 'Ullah (the children of His Holiness Beha-Ullah) and Mirza Majd'ud-Din, his son-in-law. These amanuenses wrote them in His Presence from His dictation, and after collating and revising them, copies thereof would be forwarded to the questioners. As to the letters and supplications sent to Him through Mirza Aga Jan, the amanuensis of Beha-Ullah, to which He wrote the answers, these were also dictated by Beha-Ullah Himself. Even the texts written upon the envelopes were worded by Beha-Ullah, for Mirza Aga Jan was a man of a very ordinary education, and uneducated people are naturally unable to explain intricate scientific subjects. The fact that all the Tablets forwarded in answer to the questions asked through Mirza Aga Jan were dictated to him by Beha-Ullah Himself, became clearly evident during the later days of Beha-Ullah, for Mirza Aga Jan acknowledged this before an assembly of believers. Moreover, his writings after the Departure of the Blessed Perfection, obviously and indisputably proved that the former Tablets were not his wording and compositions. "Things are known by their opposites."

As to the devotional ordinances instituted by Beha-Ullah, these comprise prayer, fasting, and the pilgrimage to the House of God, according to details explained in the Book. These are duties which are incumbent upon all, if circumstances permit their performance. There are also, invocations and prayers which the Behaïs chant in their meetings as a blessing, or the pious recite in private, while communing with God. Most of these Tablets are already collected and compiled. His ethical ordinances comprise laws commanding good qualities and excellent virtues, such as sincerity, faith, devotion, love, integrity, chastity, purity, trustworthiness and piety; and forbidding people from evil conduct and abominable deeds, such as lying, backbiting, slandering, murder, theft, fornication, disputing and striving, even with enemies, etc. He has, in numerous Tablets, commanded His followers in the most graceful and emphatic manner to possess those good characteristics, without which the world of humanity would be as a lifeless body; and has forbidden what is unbecoming to the honor of humanity. In the Book of Akdas which supersedes all former books, and is a touch-stone of hearts and souls, He says: —“Decorate yourselves with the garment of deeds; whosoever attains God’s good pleasure by deeds is of the people of Beha, and he will be spoken of before the Throne. Assist ye the King of Creation, first by deeds, then by wisdom and utterances. Thus ye have been commanded in most of the Tablets from the Presence of the

Clement One. Verily He is the Knower of that which I say! Let no one denounce another, and let no one slay another. This is that from which we have forbidden you in the Book and which was concealed beneath the awning of Might. Do you kill him whom God hath quickened with a spirit from Himself? Is not this a sin, which is great before [Our] Throne?" He has expressed these ordinances in the most forcible manner possible. Not only has He forbidden murder, conflict, and strife, but also slavery, self-exaltation and all that may cause grief and offence to men; and He has commanded meekness and humility. It is revealed in the Book of Akdas as follows:—"Ye are not allowed to buy male or female slaves. No servant has the right to buy another servant, as this is forbidden in the Tablet of God; thus hath the matter been written through mercy with the Pen of Equity. No one should glory over another; all are servants unto Him, and show that verily there is no God save Him.—Verily He is wise in all things"! In another place in the same Book He says:—"Decorate your heads with the crown of trustfulness and faithfulness; your hearts with the robe of piety, your tongues with pure truthfulness, and your temples with the mantles of courtesy. All of these are befitting to man, were ye of those who perceive." He has commanded people to sincerely love every nation, without exception, as their own brothers; no matter to what religion and sect they may belong, and to consider it a most obligatory duty to

purify their hearts and souls from former rancour. Therefore, He has commanded His friends to shun every word which might cause the slightest discord; to avoid cursing, execration and all that gives offence; to serve all people; to glory not in loving our country, but rather in loving all the world. In this connection, He has said in the Book of Akdas:—"Consort ye with all the religions with joy and fragrance, so that they may discover from you the odor of the Merciful. Beware not to be overtaken by the bigotry of the *Jaheliyyé among men.—All come from God and will return to Him. Verily, He is the origin of the people and the goal of the creatures"!

In a Tablet revealed in 1299 A. H. (1882 A. D.), in favor of Mirza Abul Fazl He says:—

"In this Day, a Sun hath risen from the horizon of Divine Providence, and this exalted Word is written upon its brow, 'Verily we have created you for love and faithfulness and not for hostility and rancour.'" In the same Tablet He says:—"Verily, God, His Prophets, Messengers, Chosen Ones, the Supreme Concourse, and the people of the Exalted Paradise and the Lofty Kingdom, bless those who arise to bring about affinity between the hearts of His Servants and beloved. Verily, He is the Compassionate and the Benevolent"! In a Tablet written in answer to the questions of one of the prominent Zoroastrians, He says:—"The Peerless Friend commands—Say, O friends,

*This term was applied by Mohammed, in the Koran, to the Pagan Arabs. Here it means fanatics among the nations who have not believed in the Cause of God.

the Pavilion of Unity is erected; do not gaze at each other with the eyes of strangers. Ye are all the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch." In the Book of Ah'd, which He wrote during His later days and in which He clearly appointed the "Center of the Covenant," the Day Spring of the Lights of the Testament, and commanded all the branches, twigs, relatives and people of Beha to obey the Powerful "Branch" extended from the Excellent and Ancient Root, He says:—"Truly I say: Piety is the greatest commander for assisting the Divine Cause, and the hosts which are worthy of this commander are pure, agreeable deeds and characters. Say, O servants, do not make the means of order a subject for disorder and do not make the reason of union, an instrument for discord. It is hoped that the people of Beha will observe the words, 'Say—All are from the Presence of God.' This exalted word is like unto water for quenching the fire of animosity and rancour hidden and deposited within hearts and breasts. Different religions will attain to the light of real union through this single word. Verily, He says the Truth and guideth to the path. And He is the Powerful, the Mighty, the Beautiful"!

To sum up; in His Tablets He has revealed wonderful words regarding the beautifying and perfecting of human characters and virtues which, as brilliant pearls, adorn and decorate the crown of the kings of the world, and from which people inhale the fragrance of roses. They have proved

effective in training and reforming the character of the Behaïs and in straightening the crookedness of the Babis, so that, notwithstanding their greatly increased numbers, they have become universally celebrated for good conduct, noted everywhere for excellent morals; and nothing contrary to humanity or against the laws of the governments proceeds from them. In 1300 A. H. (1882 A. D.), without any justification, the Behaïs were arrested and imprisoned in Teheran and other Persian cities and were pillaged and plundered by the clergy and rulers. One evening in the month Rabi'us-Sani of the same year, the Prince Nayeb'us Saltana Kamran Mirza (then Governor of Teheran and Mazanderan and the Commander-in-Chief of the Persian Army) summoned the author into His Presence. He discussed these matters for two hours with some of the Behaïs. Among other things he said:—"If the Persian Government sometimes interferes with the Babis it is in the right and not to be blamed; for the Shah and his statesmen have not forgotten the former actions of this community, nor are the battles they fought in Mazanderan, Zanjan, and Neyriz effaced from memories." Then Mirza-Abul-Fazl said:—"Although some unseemly actions which proceeded from the Babis at the outset of the Cause can by no means be denied, nor can they be excused in any way, yet to arrest the Behaïs for the sins committed by the Babis is, in fact, the greatest error and oppression upon the part of the Government. For punishing

an innocent one in lieu of the sinner is far from equity and justice. These unfortunate ones who are now subjected to the wrath and anger of the great Prince, have no connection with the Babis, nor are they of the same religion and creed; nor have they ever seen any of those Babis who fought against the Government. Should this fact be unknown to others, it is well known to your highness, the Governor of this province. You have very often arrested and imprisoned adherents of these two communities and know of the contrasts between their beliefs and doctrines and of the violent hatred and hostility which the Ezelis show toward the Behaïs. Therefore, you must realize that the division existing between the two communities is caused by their difference of opinions, conduct and beliefs. Had the Behaïs approved the conduct of the Babis and behaved accordingly, they would not have become subject to their hostility and rancour. If you carefully read tablets, books, and writings which have been taken from the Behaïs by force and pillage, you will observe that His Holiness Beha-Ullah has, in all of them, commanded His people to bear allegiance to the Government, to show respect to princes and rulers and to reverence men of learning. He has even forbidden them from smuggling their effects through custom-houses and prohibited them from infringing upon the laws in any way. Have you ever seen similar ordinances among the Babis or in their books? You also know that the people of Beha regard His Com-

mands as Divine and they are more assiduous in carrying them out than are other religions and communities in obeying their laws. You should appreciate these facts and be certain that nothing contrary to the Shah and the Persian Government will ever proceed from the Behaïs. While you have the opportunity you can do that which may greatly benefit your posterity, bring you to enjoy everlasting distinction, and cause your name to be well spoken of in the history of the world." Then, in order to make him thoroughly cognizant of this point, Mirza-Abul-Fazl asked him:—"O, Prince, how long have you been the Governor of Teheran and neighboring localities?" He replied:—"From ten to twelve years."

"During this long period, while the Behaïs were more in number in Teheran than in any other city, have you ever heard any one complain about them before the Government, for any other reason than because of their religion and doctrine? In other words, have you ever heard a Behai accused of drinking wine, rioting, wounding anybody, murder, theft, gambling, refusing to pay taxes, smuggling or conspiracy?" He answered:—"No." "Then how can you have more obedient subjects than the Behaïs, and how is it you do not appreciate this benefit? If any other government possessed such subjects, every just and unprejudiced ruler would greatly appreciate them and would recognize the necessity of protecting them. Were the leading men of the Persian Government to justly reflect upon these

points they would acknowledge the favor and providence of the Blessed Perfection, and open their mouth in His praise. Moreover, if those leaders and statesmen who still consider the Babis and Behaïs as one community and blame the innocent for the sin of the guilty, were to use sound judgment they will clearly see that the very errors which you assert were committed by the Babis were due to the bad management of both the civil and religious leaders. For if different rulers in Persia had not, by the command of the ignorant clergy, prevented the Babis from intercourse with the Bab and had not so strictly repressed religious freedom, the Babis would not have remained ignorant of the ordinances and brilliant character of the Bab, and fought in self-defence, as required by their former religion. How is it that the Behaïs, while their number is now greatly multiplied and they are far more persecuted by the Government than the former Babis, instead of defending themselves, do not even complain of any injustice? Why is it that their endurance and self-restraint is a matter of amazement to strangers, and their good conduct universally approved by all nations? It is because they are commanded to obey the Government and to love the people of the world. Through Beha-Ullah's teachings the roses of grace and compassion have grown up in the grounds of their hearts, instead of the thorns of enmity and hatred, and by Him the breeze of obedience and peace has replaced whirlwinds of de-

fence and resistance. So the Behaïs have increased and their tranquility, dignity and constancy become renowned throughout all regions and climes, while obedience to government, love and brotherhood with all the different nations have become their obligatory belief."

To sum up; Mirza-Abul-Fazl submitted these points to him with all sincerity and truthfulness, so that, if he had not been embittered with fanaticism through the influence of the clergy, he would have been able to greatly benefit himself and the Persian Government, and would have made the royal family an object of real allegiance to the people of Beha. But, alas, the hearts of some of the leading men of state were so filled and saturated with ignorant bigotry that no miracle could move them, much less the words of a man like Abul-Fazl, who at that moment was a prisoner in their hands, and his life dependent upon their immediate verdict. But the author has since learned, through numerous evidences, that although at that time the Prince was prevented by prejudice from realizing the truth of his words, yet now, twenty years after that event, he is sure of the fact that all this was said in sincerity, loyalty and allegiance, and were it not for fear of the extreme fanaticism of the clergy and the people, he would acknowledge this to be true. In the same year the author and twenty-four other Behaïs were confined in the house of this Prince, and during most of the days and

nights held two hours' intercourse with him. The only praiseworthy quality witnessed in this Prince was that he would converse with a prisoner with the utmost quietness and composure, without feeling offended or becoming irritated. In fact, he exhibited a great power of control, so that he could conceal hostility and rancour under the cover of outward cheerfulness and calmness; and disguise the most violent kind of hard-heartedness and asperity in the garb of compassion and mercy. It was due to these characteristics that the author and the other Behaïs, who were men of learning, had the opportunity of talking with him upon these subjects, and did not refrain from giving him admonition and advice, as is the duty of righteous souls. The purpose of this digression and deviation from our general subject of the laws and ordinances, is to make men of perception realize the result of the utterances of the Blessed Perfection, and understand how rapidly the Divine laws proved effective and penetrative in reforming the characteristics of the Behaïs. For it is not an easy matter that a community of recent organization, composed of different peoples and assemblages, scattered in various lands, should be so trained and supported by their leader that during the forty years of His appearance among them nothing contrary to the laws of governments should proceed from them, and that none should be accused of evil deeds or bad morals. When a man of insight considers the heavenly

laws and regulations of former Divine religions, he will find them divided into three classes in relationship with their objects. The first class contains ordinances which refer to the duty of a servant to thank, praise and supplicate his Creator, so that his heart may be purified and his soul and conscience sanctified. Thus the truth of all things may be reflected in the pure and clear mirror of this servant, and he may be led to the true realization of a position of perfect obedience to the principles of religious doctrines. Such ordinances are communes, prayers, thanksgivings, praises and other devotional acts which are the pillars of every religion. For without these the love of God and fear of Him, which are the solid foundation of humanity, cannot be realized, nor can a perfect faith upon which is based the penetration of the Word, its prevalence, and the formation of morals, be secured. "Adore Thy Lord, so that real certainty may overtake Thee." In the line of such devotional acts, after enacting laws of prayer, fasts, pilgrimage and alms-giving, which He has explained in detail in His Tablets, the Blessed Perfection has revealed great numbers of invocations and communes. In all of these, He has commanded the Worshipers to entreat God to beautify their character and endow them with excellent virtues. In order to awaken the intelligent man, we will utilize the following illustration. In performing the ablution of the hands before prayer, He has commanded the people of Beha to recite the following:—"Oh my God, strengthen

Thou my hands to take hold of Thy Book, with such steadfastness, that the hosts of the world will fail to hinder it. Then protect them from disposing of any thing not owned by them, verily Thou art the Powerful the Mighty."

In washing the face, to repeat the following:—"Oh my God, I have turned my face unto Thee; illumine it with the lights of Thy Face and keep it from turning to any but Thee." It must be evident to men of perception who ponder over this fact, that when the worshipper repeats these points several times a day and begs of God their realization in himself, he will become well-rooted in the high qualities of steadfastness, power and firmness in religion. Also that in abstaining from disposing of the property of others, and in perfect resignation unto God under all circumstances, these qualities which are accounted as the highest characteristics of man and effect the security of human society will become manifest in him. The second class comprises ordinances which, besides the benefits they impart to society, refer to individuals. For they ordain the virtues of cleanliness, purity, dignity, calmness, chastity, etc. God the Almighty, in accordance with the noble and excellent form and image of man the most comely in the world of creation, has commanded each soul to practice these virtues, in order that they may be ingrafted and well rooted within him. These excellent qualities are necessary for man, whether he be alone or in society; whether other men appreciate them in him or not; whether

they praise him for them or not; for, apart from the benefits they impart to society, they are the approved characteristics of true manhood. The forcible way in which Beha-Ullah has stated the necessity of these cleanly virtues to the people of Beha, and the eloquent manner in which He has demonstrated their properties and benefits, has never before been equalled in the heavenly books of other religions. Notwithstanding man's difficulty in forsaking old habits and his natural slowness in spiritual advancement, the reformation of the character of the Behaïs was perfectly effected in a very short space of time, and their good qualities witnessed in the writings of outsiders. In regard to cleanliness, notwithstanding the manifest advancement of some of the refined nations, it is evident that this praiseworthy quality is still imperfect among the masses. In the books of the Moslems, Jews, Zoroastrians and Hindoos, although the laws of cleanliness and ordinances concerning clean and unclean things are minutely recorded, yet there are very few of these people who are really cleanly. But many who pretend and affect cleanliness and purity, shunning those outside their religion and abstaining from touching certain animals, appear in the most impure clothing and bodies. Oftentimes they have carried this artificial idea of cleanliness to the extremes of insanity and melancholy. Stories and romances illustrating this subject furnish extraordinary records of a kind of acquired insanity which is amazing to people of intelligence.

Although the American and European Christians, more particularly the inhabitants of Holland, France, England and Germany, are far more advanced than other nations in the cleanliness of their persons, clothing, residences, roads and streets, yet they do not deem it necessary to cleanse the soil of impurities, unless they cause visible dirt. For in the New Testament no command is definitely given to avoid that which is filthy and impure. Consequently, one who has a conception of real cleanliness would not hesitate to conclude that perfect cleanliness as a practice is in its infancy, even among the most refined nations of the world, awaiting the time when God the Exalted, shall bring it to the highest pitch of perfection. Now, in order to show forth the abundant and perfect benefits of God in this great dispensation, to protect people from the melancholic imaginations of former nations and deliver more than one-half of the population of the earth from an acquired insanity, the Blessed Perfection has pronounced all things clean. At the same time He has emphatically commanded all to avoid everything filthy and to cleanse dresses, bodies and household furniture, etc., from every pollution. He has revealed these ordinances in the Book of Akdas and numerous Tablets, so that real cleanliness and perfect purity, which are high attributes of heavenly souls, may shine forth throughout all regions, and reach the highest zenith of perfection among all nations. Thus it is revealed in the Book of Akdas:—"Cleanse

every impure thing with a water which will not change by the 'three' (color, taste, smell); beware not to use a water which is infected by the air (stagnant) or by any other thing. Be the essence of cleanliness among mankind. This is that which your Master, the Mighty, the Wise, has desired for you. Thus, God hath removed the decree of uncleanness from all things, and from other nations, as a gift from God. Verily, He is the Forgiving, the Beneficent. All things are being submerged in the Sea of pureness. In the first (Day) of Rizwan,* when We manifested Ourself to all in the world with Our most Comely Names and Our exalted Attributes, all things have been submerged in the Sea of pureness. This is through My Favor, which surrounds all the creatures, so that they may consort with all religions, and deliver the Cause of your Lord the Clement. Verily, this is the Crown of all deeds, were ye of those who know! And the great pureness was commanded and cleansing from dust; how much more from solid impurity and other things? Fear God, and be of the pure ones! Whosoever has impurity upon his clothing, his prayer will not ascend to God, and the Heavenly Concourse will shun him. Make use of rose-water, and also pure attar. This is what has been pleasing to God from all eternity, so that what is wished by your Lord, the Mighty, the Wise, may be diffused from you."

In another place of the same book, He says:—

*On the first day of the Feast of Rizwan, the Blessed Perfection pronounced all things pure.

“Beware lest heedlessness may prevent you from what you have been commanded by the Mighty, the Great! Immerse yourselves in pure water; a water which has been used is not allowable. Beware not to approach the reservoirs of the baths in Persia. Whosoever goes near to them will inhale a foul smell even before entering therein. O people, turn aside from them and be not of the debased ones! Verily, it is like unto foul matter, were ye of those who know! Likewise, forsake the foul tanks (in the houses), and be of those who are pure. Verily, we have desired to see you the manifestations of Paradise on earth, so that there may emanate from you that whereat the hearts of the near ones shall rejoice. Whosoever pours water upon himself and thus bathes his body, it is sufficient, and he does not need to be immersed therein. Verily, God hath desired to make things easy for you, as a favor, so that you may be of those who are thankful.”

It is necessary to explain these points, so that the inhabitants of America and Europe, who, owing to the universal spread of civilization during the last century, enjoy all the benefits of cleanliness, neatness, and protection from fatal epidemic diseases resulting from uncleanness, may become cognizant of the disasters of the Orient, and be informed of the reason why such ordinances have been revealed. For except one is acquainted with the foulness of the waters of the public baths of Persia, the putrid tanks of their houses and mosques, the impurity of the

drinking water of the inhabitants of Bokhara and other vast countries of Tartary; and understands how cleanliness and neatness are neglected by these two great nations, it is impossible to realize the Bounty of God the Exalted, Who has revealed such ordinances, or to thoroughly understand the necessity of these laws. For it is customary with the Persian people to have but one public bath for every district which contains from one thousand to fifteen hundred houses, and their means of bathing and cleanliness is confined to this one bath. It consists of two houses, built of stone, brick and cement; one for disrobing, the other containing the hot bath, for bathing and cleansing their bodies. At one side of the latter, there is a reservoir of hot water, about three metres in length and breadth and one metre and a quarter in depth. All the inhabitants immerse and wash themselves in this hot reservoir, and there are usually from five to ten men in it, some of them sound in body, others afflicted with all sorts of fatal diseases. When leaving the reservoir, they seat themselves upon the floor, and by means of hand sacks and black porous stones, they cleanse their bodies. They are frequently shaved and dye their hair in the same place. Then washing themselves with soap, they take a final plunge into the same reservoir, the water of which is the foulest and most impure thing imaginable; and then leave the bath. Such are the baths used by fifty millions of Shi'ites who inhabit Persia, Turkestan and India. The reservoirs of Bokhara and Tartary,

which contain the drinking water of the inhabitants, are also used for bathing and cleansing, like the Persian baths. In these countries a pond is built at different places in every town and village and surrounded with mulberry trees, etc. In these ponds, the inhabitants perform their ablutions and expectorate, while at the same time they wash their feet and handkerchiefs therein. The decaying leaves and fruits of the surrounding trees also fall into them. This same water is used by the inhabitants, for drinking and cooking. Very often the water in these tanks becomes green, and worms are found in it, yet the inhabitants believe it allowable to use, and it is called "pure water" by the law. Therefore most of the inhabitants of Bokhara are afflicted with "*Filaria medinensis*," and the people of Khookand with goitre. When men of discernment ponder over the facts here briefly indicated, they will be able to realize the mercy of God in instituting such ordinances for the preservation of a community numbering over three hundred millions. For it is impossible to change by compulsion of kings or advice of wise men, certain rooted practices of a people who believe these practices to be commanded by their religion. These customs and habits can only be removed by new laws instituted by manifestations of the Command of God. For instance, the traditional customs of the Jews, extracted from the Book of Meshna, and which are not enacted in the original Bible, could not be changed through the power of any

mighty king or sagacious philosopher. This is also the case with the corrupt practices of the Hindoos and Magians. To sum up; a number of moral ordinances which secure the perfecting of human virtues have been revealed from the Supreme Pen, but to explain their benefits is beyond the limits of a short treatise. The third class comprises laws and ordinances about matters which refer to general interests and the preservation of society. These ordain justice, equity, faithfulness, truthfulness, trustworthiness, chastity, etc., without which tranquility cannot be obtained and society cannot be preserved. This class of ordinances is vast in range, and the majority of the regulations belong to it. Included among them are laws concerning business transactions, administration of government enactments, the rights of rulers and subjects, laws of marriage, heritage, etc. For man has been created a social being and his life and permanence depend upon co-operation and society. Therefore, the institutors of divine laws have assigned the greater part of them to administrative affairs, and have considered the assistance, advancement and development of the people as the most important part of their mission. Moreover, the author believes that religion is none other than an institution which secures the preservation and advancement of society. As human minds are discordant, and as it is usually impossible for the possessors of sound minds to agree upon that which will secure the protection and development of peoples, therefore God the

Exalted, has assigned the enactment of such laws to the Manifestations of His Own Command. These Holy Souls, through their divine perception, enact rules and regulations by which the support and progress of society is accomplished and advanced for about one thousand years. Then, in accordance with the law of progression and decline, which is one of the essential decrees of the world of Nature, the same Divine spirit will be manifested in another Manifestation Who renews these laws and regulations. From the above statement it is now evident that religion includes the preservation of these laws and rules, as well as attaining the knowledge of the source and fountain-head thereof. Therefore, the life and sustained vitality of nations can only be assured by appreciating this great gift. Mere faith in religion, without observing its laws and ordinances, can by no means secure our salvation and emancipation. Even love for God, without compliance with His laws and commandments, which form the cornerstone of all religious ordinances, will be considered as mere imagination and sheer pride. From this it is also understood that any nation which ignores and disobeys these holy laws, refusing to acknowledge the Dawning-place thereof, is a dead nation and will be finally extinguished and destroyed; even though it may have prevailed over the dominions of the east and west, and been honored by brilliant learning, glorious influence and powerful armies. This is made clear by reflecting upon the rise and fall of the

Pharaohs of Egypt, the Pagan Cæsars of Rome, the Keyanian kings of Persia, the Yemen princes of ancient Arabia, and the kings and descendants of Gengiz-Khan the Mongol. But whatever nation acknowledges a Holy Manifestation and obeys His Holy Law, will become a living nation, and enjoy victory, permanence, influence, and fame; even though it may seem, at the beginning, weak, oppressed, and few in number. This point was vividly illustrated in the Israelites at the Appearance of Moses; in the Christians at the Advent of Christ; and in the Arabs at the Rise of Mohammed.

The author submits that the Beauty of El-Abha (Exalted is His Glory!) has enacted laws and regulations concerning every point or subject referring to the preservation of society and the perfecting of human virtues; greater laws than which cannot be imagined by the possessors of intelligence. They concern manners and conditions of mutual intercourse, the founding of administrative organizations, the mutual rights of rulers and subjects, the spread of knowledge, respect due to philosophers and learned men, commands to refrain from rebellion against kings and princes, obedience and reverence to parents, the laws of marriage, and the mutual rights of the wife and husband, laws of inheritance and other regulations. It is only through such laws that the union and harmony among nations of different religions and tongues can be effected; for, in enacting laws upon every subject, He has taken two points into

consideration. First, that obeying and carrying them into practice may be possible for all peoples, notwithstanding the difference of their countries. Second, that they may not excite selfish prejudices and fanaticism. Through these laws, the breezes of ideal mercy and compassion will blow through hearts and souls, and the lights of real humanity will shine forth from all breasts. Thus, through the assistance of God, the spirit of disunion, discord and hostility which divides nations, will be removed, and all the earth will be considered as one Paradise and one home. For instance, as we have already stated, Beha-Ullah has not only forbidden all evil acts in detail (such as murder, backbiting, cursing, etc.), but He also has commanded that no one should open his mouth in self-glorification, or interfere with the affairs of others; because this would offend souls and grieve hearts, and finally end in inharmony and discord.

In order to cause the spread of learning and enlightenment, He has made it incumbent to educate children of both sexes, and to train them in lofty morals. Should any one disregard these commands, and neglect the training of his children, the Government shall educate and train them in the schools, and assess the expenses upon the father. Should the father be poor, the Government must furnish the funds out of the money given to God, according to the law instituted in the Book; so that excellent morals may be universally spread throughout the world, and praiseworthy qualities may be firmly im-

planted in the hearts of both sexes from their childhood. He has so emphasized this command to educate children, that no righteous man will fail to realize the necessity of complying with it. He has included the teachers of children in the list of heirs, so that their care and fatherhood may be ever appreciated by the world, and they may be encouraged to educate their pupils. The substance of what He has said in the book of Akdas upon this subject is as follows:—"Whosoever educates one of the children of the people who love God, it is as though he has educated one of the branches of the Blessed Divine Tree, and he is worthy of praise, blessing and mercy of God." When one reflects upon this point, he will find that as God has strictly commanded the spread of enlightenment and education, and as the power of the Word of God will assist it, this law of educating children will cause the removal of the darkness of ignorance and barbarity from all regions of the world, and the promise of God, "The earth shall be illumined with the light of its Lord," will be clearly realized.

In connection with occupations and professions, He has said that God the Almighty has, during this great Manifestation, made it obligatory for all to occupy themselves in professions which are praiseworthy, such as trade, agriculture, handicraft, etc. He has also stated that gaining one's living through means which benefit society is considered as worshipping God the Exalted. He has re-enforced this command by enjoining upon

the people of Beha, abstinence from monkhood, Sufi'ism, and retirement, as well as from ascetic discipline. He has commanded them to marry and to be engaged in the spread of knowledge which leads to the prosperity and welfare of peoples, and the restoration of the world. He has clearly demonstrated to intelligent men, that corruptions of Divine Religions, and the appearances of ruinous, discordant beliefs, divisions, sects and heresies, have been invented worships resulting from Sufi'ism and asceticism. For when, like a paralysis, such practices afflicted any religion or people, enthusiasm, fervour, high understanding and perception were destroyed, and lethargy, inactivity and seclusion established instead. This finally led to heretical worships and beliefs, and the corruption and destruction of the religion. Indeed, if we consider the manner of the rise of monkhood in Christianity and Sufi'ism in Islam, we readily understand that their origin was the Platonic philosophy. The dreadful wars, fictitious beliefs and practices which arose during the existence of Christianity and Islam, dividing these two religions into numerous sects and causing great national calamities, were clearly the results of monkhood and Sufi'ism. We must then realize the great Favor which God has shown to the Behaïs, and appreciate the great benefits of this strict command for all the peoples of the world. For during the last centuries preceding the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, the flourishing nation of Greece was

renowned for its abundance of knowledge and wisdom, and its extensive glory and empire. The Greek dominion prevailed in Syria, Egypt, Mesopotamia and the coasts of the Red Sea, and a great number of the learned men of this nation inhabited these countries. This naturally caused the spread of Greek learning among their inhabitants. In those days the Greek philosophy was divided into two main branches, each of which contained great philosophers and men of learning. First was the Platonic philosophy, which was founded upon abstaining from physical luxuries and perfecting spiritual virtues. That is, a seeker of perfection and of the highest degree of advancement should forsake every material delight and shun worldly occupations; he should dwell in retirement and seclusion; should practice meditation, reflection and mortification, such as vigils, abstinence and perseverance in prayer and recitations. By this his spirit may ascend to the Supreme Kingdom, and, before his natural death, he may dwell in Heaven by suffering this kind of voluntary death. According to the terms and teachings of this philosophy, he may thus be associated and in close communion with the Divine Essence, the Identity of God. Apparently this kind of philosophy was transported to Greece from the Brahman ascetics of India, and by them injected into Greek Sabeanism. For during a long period the learned men of India have been renowned for this line of wisdom, and have been engaged in severe discipline, seclusion and retirement.

The second branch was the Aristotelian philosophy, which was based upon understanding the reality of things by proving and examining causes and reasons, and by resting upon rational arguments and logical syllogisms. This theory taught that men of learning, in order to become true philosophers, should trust in clear and conclusive arguments, follow the reasons and causes of beings and effects, and look into the origin of things with the utmost freedom, in order that they may attain the knowledge of real facts. According to the author's belief, this branch of learning was brought to the Greeks from the Persians. For it is an indisputable fact to the oriental historians, that when Alexander the Great of Macedonia subdued the Keyan Dynasty and conquered the Persian countries he commanded their Zoroastrian religious books, which, according to his belief, were contradictory to the Pagan Sabeian religion, to be burnt and destroyed; but their scientific books, which contained all sorts of learning, he ordered to be sent to Greece. Ebn-Kalduon of Maghreb, whom the European writers believe to be one of the most reliable historians of the 14th century, says in the 13th chapter of the 6th part of the first book of his well-known history, after speaking of the conquest of Sa'd-Ebn-Kakkas, the Arab general, over Persia, the fall of the Sassanide Dynasty, and the burning of the Persian books according to the command of the Mohammedan Khalif Omar, son of Khattab, as follows:—
“Verily, this learning reached Greece from Persia

when Alexander slew Darius, subdued the Keyan Dynasty, and disposed of an indescribable quantity of their books. When the land of Persia was conquered (in the days of Omar), and considerable numbers of books were found there, Sa'd-Ebn-Abi-Wakkas wrote to Omar for instructions to carry them to the Mussulmans. Omar wrote him orders to throw them into the water; for, he said, 'if these books contain guidance, God hath guided us to a greater guidance (the Koran), and if they are misleading, God hath protected us therefrom.' Then these books were thrown into the water and fire, and thus the Persian learnings were destroyed and did not reach us."

When, according to historians, Christ appeared 330 years after Alexander, and His blessed Cause subdued great nations through the Heavenly Power, a considerable number of pure souls from Greece, Rome, and Syria embraced His Religion. In those days Greek Philosophy had a great renown in Egypt and Syria. The famous schools of Alexandria were the headquarters of students, and the fame of the Platonists, Stoics, Academics, and Eclectics was extended throughout east and west. Consequently, when, in the 2d Century, some of these philosophers, including Athenagoras, Pantaenus, Clemens and other great men, were converted, they became the most famous Christian philosophers. Among them was Ammonius Saccas, the founder of the celebrated School of Alexandria, who remained a Christian

up to his death. Also Justin, who, owing to his abundant knowledge, purity of character and good deeds, finally suffered martyrdom for the sake of his Faith. As Platonism was believed by these great philosophers to be the nearest to the purity and chastity of Christianity, they thought it conformable to the manner of Christian worship, and introduced it into that Religion. They frequently encouraged their pupils in private worship, to live in seclusion and in deserts, and instructed them as well as all the Christians, in the doctrines of Plato; demonstrating the Essence of God, the state of the soul after leaving the body, and in his teachings concerning angels, etc. Thus Platonic philosophy became gradually the accepted belief of Christian people. Asceticism and abstinence from worldly occupations was deemed the most excellent act of worship. As people do not usually practice moderation in anything, but carry every habit and custom to excess, either through prejudice, love of notoriety, or by inadvertence, this indulgence in asceticism and self mortification finally waxed so great that a considerable number in Europe, Asia, and Africa, notably in Egypt and Syria, went into the wilderness, and wandered in plains and deserts like wild beasts, without any fixed dwelling-place. Most of them lived upon herbs, shrubs, roots, and the barks of trees. Finally, monkhood grew out of this great spiritual wisdom,—the Platonic philosophy,—and numerous classes of monks and hermits were founded. In the 4th Century these monks were particularized by distinctive names.

Such were the Cenobites, who lived and ate together in the same house and worshipped in company; the Eremites, who led a solitary life, dwelling in hovels or cells; the Anchorites, called Vagrants, who roamed about desert places with no kind of shelter and made their living without labor, by pretended miracles, theft and other impositions, not averse to any kind of corruption or sin. During the 5th Century the chief among these classes laid down certain regulations for themselves, and became known by the name Augustinians and Basilians. Likewise, century after century, new names and branches of heretical beliefs were established, such as the Benedictines, etc. In the 6th Century this order had such great renown that, according to the record of Moshein, whole armies of monks were enrolled in it. The orders of Dominicans, Franciscans, Capuchins, Carmelites and Mystics were also established in the mediæval centuries of Christianity. Their deeds and customs are clearly recorded in church histories. The Dominican monks led the horrible Council of Inquisition in burning and destroying hundreds of thousands of persons and in confiscating and pillaging the property of one million widows and orphans. These monks, in hard-heartedness and atrocity, far surpassed Genghiz and Tamerlane, who left such evil records in history. Later, the order of Jesuits, the records of whose lives are medleys of light and darkness, benefits and losses, was founded. The Jesuits were an object of awe to the govern-

ment and people, whose thoughts were occupied in preserving themselves against this numerous and impertinent army of monks. The introduction of Sufi'ism into Islam also resulted from the Platonic philosophy. In the first and second centuries of Mohammed, His religion was promulgated in vast and extensive countries of Asia, Africa and some parts of Europe. The tyrannical, usurping Arab Khalifat then gained its importance and prevalence. Abbaside Khalifs in the east and the Omayyad Khalifs in the west, as well as their subordinate kings and princes, exerted themselves to the utmost in spreading learning and sciences and in the increase of culture and the arts. The object of this was both to satisfy the people's need of knowledge and to protect their dominion from decline and downfall. Especially Ma'moon-el-Rashid, the most valiant, cultured and famous of the Khalifs, assembled a meeting of men of learning at Baghdad, and commanded them to translate into Arabic the scientific books of the philosophers of Greece, Persia and Chaldea. He indicated more especially the Greek text-books upon nature, theology, medicine, ethical philosophy, astronomy, geometry, etc. Consequently, the Aristotelian and Platonic systems were introduced into Islam in like manner as into Christianity, and were taught by the Mohammedan doctors under the names of Illuminati and Peripatetic. This divided the religion into numerous sects. From the scientific philosophy held by the followers of Aristotle, which is based upon argument and demonstration,

appeared the different sects of Mo'tazaleh, Karra-meyeh, and Ash'arieh. From the ethical philosophy of Plato, which taught seclusion and abstinence from worldly affairs and luxuries, appeared the Sufis and Illuminati. Also different subclasses and branches appeared from Sufi'ism, such as Kadareyeh, Shazeleyeh, Naksh-bendeyeh, Cheshteyeh, etc., among the Sunnites; and the Jelalis, Nemat 'Ullahis, Haydaris, Aveysis and others among the Shi'ites. On one hand, the appearance of these sects in Islam caused the fall and extinction of other useful sciences, such as physics, astronomy, geometry and geography; and on the other hand, they entailed wars and administrative divisions. Thus were created heretical beliefs and abominable practices. Men were led to seeking help from Sufi Sheiks and leaders, giving rise to spurious claims to Mahdihood. In short, Sufi'ism brought the same calamities and evils into Islam, which were caused by monkhood in Christianity. Although monkhood occasioned civil wars and religious disasters in Christianity, yet a great many of the learned monks left worthy memorials in the Christian world, and different branches of sciences and arts were indebted to their labors and writings. Maltibran, the Frenchman, writes in his Geography as follows:—

“The perfection of the science of Geography and the removal of former mistakes, appeared from the habit of the monks.” Thus this writer has acknowledged their labors. Those who study the general history of the world clearly realize

the great pains and efforts put forth by learned monks in upholding and spreading Christianity, in eradicating fictitious Pagan beliefs, and in writing excellent scientific books. But from the 7th Century A. H. onward, nothing appeared from the dervishes and Sufis, except smoking hashish, inactivity, mendicancy, indolence, seclusion, public and private recitations, playing tambourines, ridiculous dances, etc., instead of acts of worship.

To set forth the life and circumstances of each one of these classes would need special volumes, so that their historical result might be clearly realized by men of discernment, and the minds of well-informed people be awakened.

The above-mentioned points show the effects which followed the appearance of monkhood and Sufism in the Divine Religions, and enable us to realize the great Bounty of God the Exalted, who has forbidden these corruptions during this Manifestation. For if the prohibition of invented worships and asceticism had been clearly revealed in the Heavenly Books of former nations, people would never have introduced such things into Divine Religion, nor would they have practised severe discipline or ascetic acts which were not commanded in the Divine Word.

One point that must not pass unnoticed by the men of learning is, that what has been mentioned concerning the abominable acts of the Christian monks and Mohammedan Sufis, does not refer to all of them. For there is no doubt that among them have appeared a few in every century who

have been engaged in worship and devotion with all sincerity of intention and purity of mind; men who have occupied themselves in a God-like spirit to educate youth and to beautify both their own character and that of others. Therefore the Lord Beha-Ullah has revealed passages in some of His Tablets, the essence of which is as follows:—

“Those devout and disciplined ones who, sincerely, for the sake of God, have practised separation (from the world) and devotion; all their deeds and devotional acts have attained the acceptance of God the Exalted. But they must henceforth leave cells of retreat for the open (ordinary dwellings), and be occupied in that which will profit people. Nor must they refrain from marriage which causes procreation and multiplication of the servants (of God).”

To sum up; during this Holy Manifestation, clear laws and regulations have been instituted concerning the deeds and actions of men, so that the servants (of God) may act with clear perception under all circumstances, and that they may not be tempted or deluded by the imaginations, superstitions and theological vagaries of the ignorant doctors and divines. Beha-Ullah has commanded the people of Beha to refer to the Book for the rules of action, devotion and conduct. But there is a certain class of laws which must vary according to the differences of times and circumstances. These laws, He has commanded, shall be instituted by the Houses of Justice (established in every country, city and government), according

to the necessities of the times. He has made obedience to these laws obligatory, so that Religion may not become a plaything of divines and of those who seek leadership. To fully set forth these points is far beyond the limits of this short account, but, God willing, they will be explained in full particulars, at some future date.

No such effect as that produced by the Divine Verses of this Great Manifestation, in attracting the hearts and souls of men, has been witnessed in any former Manifestation and past religion. For the Word of God proved so effective in those who believed in it, that they endured all sorts of calamities, gave up their lives, and were bathed in their own blood, without recanting or lamenting. To reflect upon this will also make men realize how much greater is this cause than that of former Manifestations. For during the Manifestations of Moses and Christ no one ever gave his life for the sake of the Lord, while the Sun of Truth was shining and the Manifestation of God lived among men. But in this Manifestation people vied with each other in offering their lives, and displayed the utmost endurance and composure in the time of persecution. They sacrificed themselves with all cheerfulness and joy, in love for the "Beloved of the creatures." For instance; in the earlier years after Beha-Ullah's declaration, they arrested a youth of Zanjon, by name Mirza Nejef Ali, who was a messenger of Beha-Ullah. He was on his way from Kashan to Teheran, accompanied by a dervish whom he supplied with food and travelling

expenses. When they reached Teheran the dervish informed the Government that a Behai messenger had arrived with mails. Accordingly he was arrested, branded with red-hot irons for several days and afflicted with all kinds of torture. Finally, as he would neither deny his religion nor recant, they beheaded him and dragged his corpse along the ground to the place of the gallows. In each year similar cases occurred, which served but to attract the hearts of the people.

A very striking event which happened later was the martyrdom of Wargha and his little son Mirza Rouha'llah. It is a matter of amazement to men of perception, when they reflect upon the great self-restraint and endurance of these two holy souls and the hard-heartedness of the wicked. Wargha the Martyr was learned and a venerable man, expert in medical science and well versed in literature and composition. He wrote poetry in Persian with the utmost elegance and beauty. Wargha and his little son Mirza Rouha'llah were arrested while on their way to Teheran, in the year 1896, for no other reason than being Behaïs, and put in chains in the royal prison of Teheran. The child, although only eleven or twelve years old, had been educated and trained by his father and was very intelligent. During the month of May in the same year, Jaffar Kuli Khan, entitled "Hajib-ed-Dawla," the chief of the prison, without the knowledge of the Government, went one day to the jail with several executioners, and commanded them to bring Wargha before him. In

the presence of the little boy they forced the head of that great man into the hole of a torturing machine, constructed of blocks of wood and thick rods of iron; an apparatus in which they fasten the feet of criminals in Persia. Then they cut his body into pieces with a poniard. After having in this way executed Wargha, Jaffar Kuli Khan told the little son to repudiate his father's religion, promising that he would then appoint him to a high position with the sons of the Shah; otherwise he would cause him to share the same fate which his father had met before his eyes. Mirza Rouha'llah, whose face shone with the light of joy and happiness, expressing the spirit of steadfastness and reverence, refused this proposal with the greatest fervency and promptness, saying he would by no means waver from the right path or reject the Divine Religion for the sake of the transient life of this world and its fleeting honors. Finally, they martyred the innocent child and concealed both mutilated corpses in a private place. Scarcely a year passes without similar dreadful events occurring in Persia, and the blood of these people is still shed for the sake of the Behai Religion. Even in 1901, three Behaïs were martyred in a shocking manner in Abargoo, situated between Yezd and Isfahan.*

*The names of these three, the full particulars of their martyrdom and the Tablets revealed for them by the Master, were sent to me in Feb., 1902, from Akka. By the Master's command I have translated and will publish them in a separate pamphlet.—Translator.

His Holiness Abdul-Beha.

As to the birth and life of our Lord Abdul-Beha (Glorified is His Name):—He was born in Teheran, on the 5th day of the month Jamadi-ul-Aval, 1260 A. H. (May 23d, 1844); the same day in which the First Point (Exalted is His Supreme Name) had declared Himself. He was reared in that city under the training of Beha-Ullah. The author has heard from His own blessed lips, as well as from many others, that He very often suffered persecution and execrations, while yet a child, from the fanatics of Teheran, during the disasters which followed the Appearance of the Bab. When Beha-Ullah was in chains in the Prison of Teheran, Abdul-Beha visited Him. During the time Beha-Ullah resided at Baghdad by command of the Persian Government, 1269 A. H. (1852-1853), His Holiness the Master was in His service and constantly in His Presence.

Although He had not studied in any school, yet, from His youth, fountains of knowledge flowed in His fluent explanations. The first trace which emanated from His Holy Being in the world of knowledge was the treatise He wrote in His early youth at Baghdad. This was a commentary upon the holy tradition:—"I was an invisible Treasury; as I loved to be known, therefore I created men to know Me." He wrote this commentary in answer

to the request of one of the Pashas. The author was present at a meeting, when some one asked Haji-Seyd-Jawad Taba-Tabay of Kerbela concerning the life of Beha-Ullah. The great Seyd answered:—"That Holy Being must be a Shining Light whose great Son hath written such a treatise during his childhood." By this the learned Seyd meant that while it is impossible even for a scholar to show forth such great knowledge, how much more impossible would it be for a person to write such a treatise in his childhood without having studied. Therefore, such knowledge is heavenly and not earthly; it is Divine wisdom, not human, and it owes its origin to the Holy Spirit of God. Thus, even in His childhood, the signs of grandeur and dignity were manifest from His brow and He showed forth phenomenal intelligence and wisdom. His wonderful speech in explaining abstruse points, astonished men of intelligence, and His marvellous eloquence everywhere attracted hearts and souls. His acute judgment was a brilliant lamp in elucidating intricate obscurities and His penetrative discernment in managing and deciding different affairs, improved the condition of young and old. He was the companion of Beha-Ullah, and the sharer of His afflictions during His successive banishment from Baghdad to Constantinople, thence to Adrianople, and finally to Akka. All the people of Beha resorted to Him in their difficulties and obeyed His decision. More especially during the twenty-four years of Beha-Ullah's residence at Akka, the troubles of

Abdul-Beha were so great that no one but Himself could have endured such calamities. The very fact that Akka was a place of exile for Turkish suspects and prisoners, meriting the name "Great Prison," given to it by the Supreme Pen, is a sufficient testimony of the tribulations and vicissitudes which Abdul-Beha has suffered. For, as we have formerly remarked, Beha-Ullah, during His residence at Akka, would not, as a rule, converse with any save the Behaïs, unless some one especially asked permission to visit Him. His Holiness Abdul-Beha, however, held intercourse with all the men of different religions, aims, tastes, characters, and degrees, and each one would submit to Him his individual wishes. Consequently, different classes and nationalities of Moslems, Christians, Behaïs, Arabs and Turks, as well as Persians belonging to the governing and learned classes,—likewise great merchants and people of the lower orders,—visited Him from early morning until midnight. Some of them sought His presence for the benefit of His spiritual explanation; others for their personal affairs and requests. Any one informed upon the manners of oriental governments, and thoroughly acquainted with the conditions of the inhabitants of those countries, will realize the great difficulties which surrounded that Holy Being. He, under all circumstances, would receive the people with a cheerful face, and endeavor as far as possible to grant their wishes and assist them. Even in the present day, His Holiness is the resort of the people of that land, and all

refer their wishes and hopes to Him. He is a physician to every invalid, a shelter to every exile, a refuge to every seeker for help, and a dispeller of sorrow to every grieved soul. As God knows and witnesses, the author, during the ten months he stayed as guest in His beneficent shelter, can testify that even those fettered in the jail and deprived of seeing the daylight, received His benefits and favors; and exiles forsaken in the cells of oblivion were visited by Him. These excellent characteristics were inborn in Him, and no one can show forth such virtues through imitation or pretence. Even the greatest men in the world could not manifest their like. There is an old proverb:—"Nothing manufactured is like unto the natural."

Abdul-Beha was named Mirza-Abbas after His grandfather, but subsequent to their arrival at Baghdad He was called "His Holiness the Master." After the declaration of the "Blessed Perfection," He was given several lofty titles by Him, such as "Sir 'Ullah" ("Mystery of God"), "Gusn 'Ullah 'El-A'zam" ("Greatest Branch of God"). By these titles He was addressed verbally and in writing by Beha-Ullah and all the believers.

In the earlier days of Beha-Ullah's declaration, the blessed Book of Akdas was revealed. This is considered the greatest book of the Behaïs, and contains all the Divine Laws and Ordinances. The following irrefutable command was revealed therein:—

“When the sea of (My) meeting sinks, and the book of the Origin is achieved to the end, turn ye your faces to ‘He who is desired by God’; the One who is extended from this Ancient Root.” Likewise it is recorded in another part of the same Book:—“When the Nightingale soareth from the grove of Praise, and repaireth to the furthestmost concealed Destination, refer ye that which you understand not from the Book, to the Branch extended from this Firm Root.” Thus all the people of Beha were informed of the One who will be the “Center of the Cause of God” and their resource, after the disappearance of the “Sun of Truth” and the departure of the Beauty of Oneness. Thus they have hope in and rely upon this Providence shown forth by God the Exalted to them. They recognize in Abdul-Beha the Expounder of the Divine Book and the Solver of the intricate points of the Heavenly Revelation; whose decision is conclusive; through whose explanation every discord and divergence is removed, and the seekers are brought to perfect realization, accord and affinity. They thank and praise God the Exalted, and manifest the utmost joy and happiness at His Appointing the Resort of the Cause of God. To the people of Faith, the clear appointment of the Center of the Cause, after the Departure of the Manifestation, is considered the most important point in religious matters, as it is the greatest channel which connects the servants of God with Holy and Divine Truth. For it is only through His explanation and decision that all discord is

removed. Consequently the Behaïs appreciate the determining of the "Appointed Center" as the greatest of the Divine Providences, and account His blessed Being as an impregnable fortress which protects the Divine Religion from the doubts of the sceptic and fanciful imaginations of men. They were all sure and convinced that the purpose of God the Exalted, in these two blessed Verses, has been no other than His Holiness the Lord Abdul-Beha; for, apart from the Divine signs that were manifest in Him, Beha-Ullah clearly and implicitly, verbally and in writing, directed all of His servants to the blessed Person of Abdul-Beha, and, under all circumstances, clearly showed that He was far distinguished above others, in order that all the servants should look unto Him alone, and follow His Commands. But notwithstanding all this, as Beha-Ullah foresaw, that when His Beauty of Oneness was concealed under the veils of disappearance, the people of desire, through jealousy, would hold to groundless doubts and suspicions, and, disregarding the prohibition to interpret the Book, would divert the real meaning of the two verses above quoted, away from the "Appointed Center." He, therefore, prior to His Departure, revealed the blessed Kitab-el-'A'hd (Book of the Covenant, the Will of Beha-Ullah). This He wrote, and sealed it with His own blessed Hand and Seal, in order that the darkness of discord might not again obscure the brilliant Horizon of the Cause of God, and the calamities and disasters which afflicted other re-

ligions might not overtake this movement. In this Book (His Covenant) He clearly indicated that the purpose of the "Branch extended from the Ancient Root," revealed in the blessed Verse of Akdas, was the Center of the Circle of Names, the Exalted Branch of the Blessed Tree of Abha, His Holiness Abdul-Beha. Then He, for the second time, enjoined, through an unchangeable and irrefutable command, all His "branches," "twigs," "relatives" and the people of Beha without exception, to look unto that Dawning-place of Divine Light, and to know Him as the Source and Origin of the commands and prohibitions of the Heavenly Religion. He desired, by this clear elucidation, to counteract the imaginations of the ignorant, extinguish the world-consuming flame of the jealousy and hatred of people of error, and guard the Divine Religion from divisions and sects which are, according to the judgment of common sense and the clear texts of the Holy Tablets of God, the most deplorable for religion and humanity. By this He sought to preserve the Divine Word from human doubts, suspicions and artifices.

But alas! All these clear texts of God, commanding people to turn to the Day-spring of the Light of the Covenant, did not check the evil thoughts of the people of discord; and His repeated exhortations and advices did not soften the hard hearts of the men of hostility, nor prevent them from ruinous discords and divisions. For when, in May, 1892 A. D. (2nd Zul-Ka'da, 1309 A. H.), Beha-Ullah ascended to His Most Holy

Station, and nine days after His Departure, the Book of the Covenant of God was chanted in the Holy Tomb in the Assembly of Believers, the gloom of animosity and disappointment became instantly manifest upon the faces of those who had groundless pride and desire for leadership, and who sought to raise discord and contradiction. On the other hand, cheerfulness and joy were manifest in the shining faces of those who had no desire but that of seeking the Truth and telling the Truth. Some were seated upon the right hand of certainty, firmness and steadfastness in the solid covenant of God, and some stood upon the left hand of unhappiness, in their impossible desire and erroneous thoughts. The former became distinguished for their firmness and inflexibility; noted for the effectiveness of their word, their good name and success in assisting the cause, while the latter were distinguished by their instability, degradation and shame. From that day, the thorn of violating the "Covenant of God" grew in the Garden of the Behai community and the signs of senseless hatred and hostility proceeded from a limited number of persons who are known as the "Nakezeen" (violators of the Covenant). The one community of Beha-Ullah which was as the breeze of Paradise and the fragrance of the morn of Providence, free from the foul odors of animosity and discord, became divided through the evil intrigues of these few, and the Holy Word which He had strictly forbidden to be altered or transposed, became colored with the

dark doubts and false interpretations of those hostile men. They spread many false and insignificant pamphlets for the purpose of creating doubts and sedition, and put forth all sorts of untrue accusations and calumnies. They cursed and insulted the visitors to the Holy Tomb of the Blessed Perfection, and made the Holy Threshold,—which is the Point of prayer and supplication, the Sacred House of commune and invocation,—as a place for distressing and confusing hearts. Finally, it was feared that some of the youthful believers would no longer be able to endure the evil tongues and cursing of the Nakezeen, and a disturbance might arise which would be contrary to the tranquil disposition of the Behaïs and would desecrate the Holy Tomb. Consequently His Holiness Abdul-Beha asked the local Government to supply a guard to accompany the Believers upon the days of visiting the Holy Tomb, so that they might be protected from unseemly disturbance and be able to engage in prayer and devotion with composure. Although these people who violated the Covenant received, during the life of Beha-Ullah and after His Departure, every kindness and favor from His Holiness Abdul-Beha, who considered their welfare and prosperity before His own and that of the faithful believers, yet, on account of jealousy and selfishness, they violated the cause of God. Thus came to pass that which was prophesied by the Prophets,—especially Christ,—concerning the people of the right hand and the people of the left hand; and each will re-

ceive the reward of his deeds according to the justice of God. Two important points increased the flame of the fire of jealousy in the hearts of these Nakezeen, whose number does not exceed thirty. One was that the Behaïs of all countries refused to accept the seditious books and pamphlets forwarded to them by the Nakezeen. According to the command of Beha-Ullah, they unanimously determined not to pay any attention to these intrigues and temptations, but took shelter, with the utmost union and harmony, under the banner of the Center of the Covenant. Another point was that during a short space of time the cause of God became far more widely spread than before, through the fluent pen and brilliant explanations of Abdul-Beha; so the number of the Behaïs became enormously multiplied since the departure of Beha-Ullah. The fame of the Dawning Place of the Light of the Covenant spread throughout all regions, and His Holy Tablets became scattered as rose-petals throughout all countries. His Great Name filled the world with awe and the renown of His glorious deeds reached all in the east and west. Therefore, the people of hostility and violation availed themselves of political machinations, and disturbed the minds and thoughts of fanatical men in those lands, until, finally, in 1901, the great imprisonment was renewed and the life of Abdul-Beha became subject to the same disasters which formerly befell Beha-Ullah. As this extraordinary happening (the violation by the Nakezeen) is one of the most aston-

ishing events which human prejudice has ever created in the world, and the author has not now sufficient time to give it in detail, he confines himself to this short account, while begging God to enable him to write the full particulars at a future time, and to bring it to the notice of the righteous.

Exordium.

In the Name of God, The Clement, The Merciful! O ye just ones! Verily, I praise for you our Lord the Behi-Ul-Abha, and offer the most excellent homage and exaltation to His Beauty, The Most Luminous, The Most Holy, The Exalted, The Supreme; and I salute and glorify the excellent Branch which is extended from the Exalted Tree, the blessed "Sadrat," planted in the center of the "Paradise of perpetual abode"; the Lord of mankind and the Possessor of the hearts of the prudent. The hearts of the righteous are forever turned unto Him, and the heads of the holy ones are humbled before Him, so long as the sun is shining from heaven; to Him the Birds of Sanctity are warbling hymns of glorification and praise.

An illustrious Command hath issued from the Holy Court, that I should compile for you a book for the solution of the allegories of the Heavenly Scriptures and interpretation of the intricacies in the texts of the Divine and Holy Writings. To discover their hidden facts, explain the meanings of their symbols, open their seals, reveal their purport, and unveil their treasures; so that the gems of their mysteries may sparkle forth, and their precious and peerless pearls may gleam; this, then, shall be the motive of my humble endeavor,

the measure of my privilege and the witness of my obedience to the revered and authoritative Command emanating from the Court of Holiness.

By your life, O ye noble, just ones! This glorious Command hath indeed moved and rejoiced me. The receipt of this praiseworthy Mandate hath fortified and encouraged me to arise in compliance with the blessed and honorable Command, and overcome the manifold difficulties which intervene to prevent the fulfilment of this important and serious work.

Verily, all the Heavenly Books, Writings and Texts are songs sung by the Birds of Holiness, in the praise of our Lord El-Abha; hymns warbled by the Doves of Harmony, proclaiming the signs of His Beloved Manifestation; verses and rhythms uttered by the Tongues of Prophets, declaring the tokens of the Hour of the greatest Resurrection; melodies chanted in the assemblies of the people of Sanctity, clearly indicating the Day-Spring of the Lights of His Covenant and Testament, The Most Mighty, The Supreme. How excellent, then, is the mentioning and explanation thereof! How delightful is the interpretation and solution thereof! How sweet is the recital and elucidation thereof!

For this Day is no other than the end of the ages; no other than the illumination of the horizons of earth, both east and west, with the Lights of the Forgiving Lord; no other than the changing of darkness into light, and of sorrow into joy and gladness; whereby hearts are cheered, souls

are tranquilized, eyes are consoled and breasts are dilated. This is the Day of God.

Consequently we take the pen and commence our treatise, relying, under all circumstances, upon God the Exalted! We beseech His Lofty Threshold to render easy unto us the accomplishment of this glorious work, and vouchsafe the ability to achieve it in perfect form, with speed.

Now we place before our beloved ones certain Introductions which may help them to apprehend the above-mentioned hidden and veiled meanings, and understand the symbolic aims which have been sealed, during generations, since olden times.

First Introduction.

Explaining briefly "The Day of God" and the realization of the mighty "Hour" ("Day of Judgment").

O ye people of Beha and companions of the Red Ark! Know—may God the Exalted assist ye through a spirit sent from Him!—Verily, when ye consider carefully the announcements in the Heavenly Books and perceive the glad-tidings in the Holy, Divine Writings, ye will find they agree in promising the coming of "the Day of God" and foreshadowing the arrival of the "Hour" wherein the Face of God will be manifested, the regions of heavens and earths will be illuminated by His coming, all former things will be changed by His rising, and every sorrow effaced. The essence of all that is recorded concerning these glad-tidings is this, that when oppression and tyranny prevail throughout the world; when distress and tribulations are intensified among the nations; when divergences of religions and creeds become grave and widespread, and the heaven of worship of the Merciful God is riven and overthrown; when the greed of souls grows fierce to violate men and property; when terrors and adversities prevail; at that time the Divine Herald will arise, the Holy Heavenly Spirit will descend, announcing the coming of the Manifestation of the promised Lord and proclaiming the approach of the dawn of the Orb of His

Glorious Beauty. Then will the Path be made plain, hearts brought nigh unto God, breasts healed, griefs dispelled and tears wiped away. Then will the glorious Lord arise and utter a Call which shall shake the pillars of this lofty edifice. He will cry out in a voice which shall fill the expanse of the world and summon all the nations of the earth, both east and west, to God, The Mighty, The Glorious! Then will He institute for them new laws, and trace out for them a plain, direct path.

And after the setting of the Sun of His Beauty, the breeze of His Presence being hushed, the Glorious Branch extended from the Tree of His Essence will arise; the dawning moon will shine from the horizon of the Heaven of His Bounty, diffusing the lights of His Religion, establishing the Temple of His Worship, and sitting upon the Throne of His Glory. His holy Word will penetrate all regions until the saying be fulfilled, "The earth will be illuminated with the Light of its Lord, in the Day of Judgment."

With the rising of such Divine Souls and the shining forth of such Heavenly Lights, the clouds of fictitious beliefs will be dispersed and the pearls of the Realities of Knowledge will become manifest; religious divergences will be removed and nations will be united in worshipping the Merciful One. So the worship of Satan shall pass away. In that Day, God will "make all things new." Everywhere, affairs will change, until all parts of the earth shall rejoice. Enlightenment, learning, arts

and trades will become universal among mankind. The remote ones of the world will be brought nigh; nations and peoples will be harmonized; the rancours and animosities hidden in breasts shall be removed, and love, affection, attraction and brotherhood become general throughout the world. Then souls will be cheered by the wafting of the fragrances of joy, and hearts will rejoice at the blowing of the Breezes of Gladness. The Lord will destroy all vestiges of tyranny, oppression and rebellion, through His Power, and will propagate evidences of Equity, Justice and Charity.

He will judge between nations, render justice between people, correct souls and unite hearts. Then the time of spoiling will pass away, and the days of warring cease; the swords will be made into plough-shares, the spears into pruning-hooks; no nation will raise sword against another, and no "multitudes will wage wars together."

To resume; the Fragrances of Resurrection will stir and the Breezes of Life will blow; the dead will be quickened, the darkness of former things be dispelled, and the lights of ideal virtues will shine; the emblems of true humanity will be raised in all places, and the Lord of Heaven and Earth will illumine all regions, both east and west. These are some of the signs appointed as pertaining to the Day of God, and decreed for the Age of the Manifestation of God, which we have brought to your notice. Were ye to consider them with the eye of thoughtfulness and percep-

tion, ye would find them facts clearly recorded in all the Books and Scriptures; written by the Pen of God during the bygone centuries and ages.

Likewise, the clear judgment must consider the necessity for the fulfilment of these promises and the attainment of the world to its loftiest height. As this, our world is created spherical as to form and rotation, so likewise it is spherical in its physical revolutions, such as ascent and descent, advancement and recession, progress and decline, until God may allow its destruction and destine its extinction. This is what is interpreted by philosophers of Divinity to be the arc of ascent and descent of the circle of creation; and by the natural philosophers to be the laws of development and retrogression. As in this age our world is upon the ladder of ascent, which fact is indisputably acknowledged by the philosophers and scientists; therefore it must needs ascend to its loftiest degrees of perfection, and attain its point of equilibrium. Far be it from the Divine Wisdom and the Sublime Heavenly Power to permit the leaves of the Book of the Universe to remain scattered, the Epistle of Creation mutilated, the ground of capacities fallow, and the trees of humanity fruitless! Mankind must of necessity reach the loftiest destination, the highest goal, the exalted grade and supreme station.

The Guardians of the Divine Revelation (Prophets) have interpreted this station to be "Regeneration."

Then, when ye, O people of Beha, carefully consider the world, ye will perceive that all the nations of the ancient world have been totally incruited by false worships of paganism and Sabeism; the darkness of imaginations and fictitious ideas has prevailed in every region, and entangling beliefs and evil customs accumulated in every clime. Inasmuch as the above-mentioned nations were ignorant of the meanings and original purposes of the texts revealed in the Heavenly Books, such as ascent and descent, return and restitution, heaven and earth, sun, moon and stars, resurrection, death and life, and many similar words which were upon the lips of the prophets since the ancient days, and were uttered by the Tongue of God from the foundation of the world; and as they understood such words according to their literal sense; therefore these nations fell into the gulf of the fictitious beliefs of paganism. Among these pagan notions were transmigration of souls, transformation of embodiments, worship of stars, animals and trees, services of genii, controlling spirits and other ruinous practices and pernicious beliefs,—which facts are evident to every informed historian, and to every student and archæologist. As the gloom of fictitious and superstitious beliefs prevailed in all parts of the world; as the clouds of ruinous practices, the dusk of pernicious actions, densely enveloped all regions, and veils of suspicion hung upon every side; and as the earth was entirely covered by darkness upon darkness, therefore the

prophets (peace be upon them!) have interpreted that long duration as the "gloomy night," and the time of its disappearance as the "bright morning," "the day when it shineth."

The Great Lord Moses, the "Interlocutor," was the first one who arose in that dark and gloomy period, and announced to the Israelitish people the coming termination of that long night. He proclaimed the advent of the glorious "Day of God." He taught them the Unity of God; made known to them the way of worshipping God; implanted in their hearts the expectation of the arrival of the "Day of God," and explained to them the signs, symbols, tokens and wonders thereof.

So also in the past days, that "Abraham" who was entitled Zoroaster, appeared in Persian regions and taught the Parsee nation the worship of the merciful God, abolishing idolatry from among them, announcing the coming of the "Hour," reminding them of the future Resurrection, explaining the signs and tokens thereof, and unveiling the appointed time. Moreover, he clearly stated to them that, verily, the sun of the promised Beauty should dawn from the horizon of the east, and that the blessed Sadrat would spring forth from a well-rooted tree of Persia. But, as at that time the darkness was overcoming the light, and the hours of gloomy night were still far from the dawning-place of Manifestation, the false imaginary beliefs and pernicious worship of paganism again prevailed even among the Hebraic and Persian nations. Thus the worship of

God was mingled with fire-worship, and the kings of Judea and Ephraim associated with nations rooted in paganism, such as the Egyptians, Phenicians, Assyrians, Chaldeans and Greeks, because the latter had assumed dominion over the lands of Palestine and the inhabitants thereof. On this account the Hebrews were compelled to live under the laws of those governments, to obey their kings, adore their demons and worship their idols. Yet, among them, the Israelitish prophets, such as David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Zechariah, and others (peace be upon them!), were, during fifteen hundred years, reminding the people of the coming of the "Day of God," and reviving hopes in their hearts of the "Manifestation of God." So these prophets were, in their cycles, as beaming stars which shone forth from the uttermost horizon of heaven; as lamps enkindled and aflame in the gloomy and obscure night.

In that way many generations passed, until the glorious Saviour arose and the brilliant star dawned from the horizon of Galilee. Then the planet of the Son shone from among the posterity of Abraham, the melodies of the Gospels pealed forth and the descent of calamities upon the children of Israel drew nigh. Our Lord Christ (upon Him is Glory and Grandeur!) arose and cried with loudest voice:—"Repent ye, for the Kingdom of God is at hand!" "Awaken and be mindful! The Hour of the Coming of the Kingdom of God approacheth!" "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!" "Blessed are the peace-

makers, for they shall be called the children of God!"

Likewise, during His lifetime, He was continually reminding them of the approach of the "promised Day," renewing and establishing the Signs of the Appearance of the Beauty of the Adored One, which had been prophesied by the prophets of Israel.

Christ declared that in "that Day" He will sit upon the right hand of His (the Father's) Throne; will be authorized to make His commands effective; will be established upon the Seat of His Glory, and become the shepherd of His sheep, through His Permission. He (Exalted is He!) heralded the approach of the Great Hour, the Mighty Day of Resurrection, until He ascended to the Supreme Friend. Then Apostles arose to spread His Cause and promote His Word, until now all the European regions are illuminated by the lights of His Command, and are becoming purified from the filth of paganism.

Six centuries lapsed after the departure of Christ, until the Beams of Dawn appeared from Arabian horizons and the shining of Morning Light was transmitted from the direction of Hedjas. The greatest signs of the Hour appeared and the mightiest Tokens of the Day of Judgment became manifest. Mohammed arose, crying out with the loudest call:—"The Sentence of God will surely come (to be executed); wherefore do not hasten it." This voice was heard from heaven:—"The time of their accounts hath drawn

nigh unto the people, while they are turning away therefrom." He clearly stated that the gloomy night had expired and the dawning of the Sun of Truth from the Supreme Horizon was at hand. Through the light of His word and the power of His prophethood He illumined great nations and multitudes, from the remotest parts of Africa to the distant east; peoples who knew nothing concerning Unity and had tasted no drop from the fountain of Oneness; those who had denied the Prophets and falsely accused the Chosen Ones. The Word of Mohammed and His prophetic testimony drove them out of the darkness of paganism toward the Light of the Worship of God. Thus they were turned from denial of Prophets to belief in the line of holy messengers from Adam to Jesus the Spirit of God. Mohammed announced to them the coming of the Day of God, and made with them a covenant to expect the descent of the Spirit (Christ) from the Heaven of the command of God. But He also clearly stated that the Precursor, who shall arise before His descent, to prepare the way before His coming, will come forth from His (Mohammed's) posterity; that through Him (Christ) God will fill the earth with equity after it had been filled with injustice, and illuminate all regions with justice after they had been darkened by tyranny. Then He established books of traditions and prophecies, and filled pages with signs and tokens. The earth of enlightenment rolled around its axis for 1260 years, until the Hour drew nigh and the appoint-

ed time arrived. Then the Star of Guidance dawned, the Planet of Purity shone forth, the Fountains of Knowledge gushed out in one of the best lands of the Orient, and the Tree of Grace was ignited in the city of Shiraz, the chief town of the province of Fars. The Most Great Bab (Gate) arose, preaching to the multitudes and peoples, heralding again the expiration of the gloomy night, foreshadowing and clearly declaring the coming of the great and dreadful "Day of God." He raised this call betwixt the heaven and earth:—"Rejoice! Rejoice! The Morn of Guidance hath indeed appeared, the gloomy night hath cleared away, and the Dawning of the Beauty of God, El-Abha is at hand. The spring-time of the Return of the Realities of Regeneration hath come." All regions trembled with this most sweet call and the Resurrection appeared through the supreme Message. The storms of oppression blew and the whirlwinds of rancour stirred in the breasts of religious doctors. Then the brilliant Flame was extinguished, the spiritual Fragrance ceased and the Beauty of the Merciful One was martyred in the city of Tabriz, the chief town of Azerbaijan, under the sentence of a satanic and impious one. Calamities and afflictions appeared, animosity and malice showed forth and the dark clouds of discord became violent; until the appointed time came and the Signs of the arrival of the "Day of God" were manifest in all directions.

Then dawned the Sun of the Beauty of the Promised One; then rose and beamed the Orb of

the Face of the Adored One. The Hour arrived, the Resurrection came, the trumpet sounded and the dawn of the Manifestation shone forth. Beha-Ullah-El-Abha arose; the Beauty of the Supreme God appeared and called out with a voice that filled all regions, causing the "seven strata of the earth" to tremble. Now the promised God hath indeed come, the Beauty of the Adored One hath appeared, the appointed Day of God hath dawned and His irrefutable and glorious Command hath arisen. The Lord hath descended in the shadow of clouds; the earth is shining with the Light of the Face of its Lord, the Bestower; the Bridge is extended, the Book is appointed, the curtain is lifted and the veil is removed. Showers of Verses have fallen, branches of Knowledge have put forth leaves and become flourishing in all directions. The dead have arisen and the lifeless are resurrected. The rivers of Knowledge and enlightenment have flowed from His Supreme Pen and He hath broken the seal of the "Sealed Wine" with His Generous Fingers. He hath explained in His Holy Tablets the realities of the Words of the Prophets, and hath disclosed in His precious Writings the meanings of the symbols of the Elect, until all the seals of the Prophets have been opened and the aims of the Messengers become unveiled to the possessors of pure hearts. He instituted new laws which are destined to unite all nations and multitudes; issued a glorious Command which will bring together all religions and creeds, enjoined His Saints to love all nations

and exhorted them to serve all the people of the world. He enacted for them devotional ordinances, such as fasting, prayer, pilgrimage, almsgiving and other rites and ceremonies. He forbade crimes and sins, such as murder, adultery, theft, backbiting, lying, calumny and other iniquities and offences. He commanded them to submit to the laws of governments, urged them to obey kings and princes and to respect those who are good among the learned men and doctors. He exhorted them to universally spread enlightenment, to educate their children of both sexes and absolutely prohibited them from that which may create oppression and hatred in the world. He forbade them from cursing, execration, insult, strife, conflict and all that is calculated to separate hearts or perturb souls. He even forbade them from carrying arms without the permission of rulers, and from everything that may cause confusion.

During His last days He wrote the Kitab-el-Ah'd (The Book of the Covenant, Testament or Will) with His blessed Fingers, in which He clearly stated and appointed the "Center of the Covenant," directing peoples to the Orb of the Universe. In this Book He again exhorted His friends and followers to show forth good characteristics and noble attributes, so that there may appear pure and chaste souls among His believers; shining and beaming stars in the heaven of His Cause.

Likewise, the torrent of His Verses and the shower of His Graces abundantly poured down, until the time of Disappearance drew nigh, and the Sun of Truth was concealed in the veil of Absence. The Lord ascended to the Supreme Court of His Might, and His blessed Identity was hidden in His Invisible, Furthermost Essence. This calamitous event and lamentable disaster happened on the 2nd of the month Zi-Ka'da, 1309 A. H., which corresponds to the 16th of May, 1892 A. D.

When the Sun of Guidance was set and the rustle of the Sadrat-el-Muntaha hushed, then the Orb of the Covenant dawned and the "Moon" of the Testament appeared with the utmost brilliancy and effulgence. The glorious "Branch extended from the Ancient Root" arose to promote the Word of the King of the Day of Judgment, and now He is crying and heralding throughout all regions:—"The Judgment of God hath come; respond ye, respond ye unto the Call of God! Hearken ye, hearken ye to the Melodies of God! Inhale ye the Fragrances of God! Be illumined, be illumined with the lights of the Face of Beha-Ullah! The promises of the Prophets have already been fulfilled, the prophecies of the Messengers realized; the Day of Judgment hath come, and mankind hath stood before the Lord of the creatures!"

After the breezes of the Testament had blown and the Fragrances of the Covenant wafted, the pure writings rapidly circulated and were spread

throughout all regions; just as the petals of roses are scattered in spring-time and light diffuses its effulgence; souls were revived and breasts dilated; "thousand thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand ministered unto Him," and all in the graves arose. Then the signs of violation appeared in the faces of the people of discord, and armies of retreat joined the ranks of the people of opposition. Souls were taken away and branches were cut down; those of the right hand were divided from those of the left hand; the dwellers in hell-fire were distinguished from the abiders in the Exalted Heaven, and the suspicious were separated from the people of Assurance. Blessed are those who attain! Glad-tidings unto those who are assured!

O people of Beha and faithful ones! Were ye to consider, for a third time, the utterances of the Prophets and the words of the Chosen Ones, ye will find that not one of those who appeared before the Manifestation of Beha-Ullah has ever claimed to be the Greatest Manifestation of God who should come and pacify the World,—whose Day is the Day of God unanimously agreed upon by all nations and peoples.

The Prophets and messengers are all manifestations of One Reality. This will be explained in the treatise upon "Unity."

The qualities which differentiate the prophets and manifestations of God are their individual characteristics and peculiarities. These distinguish them in their outward station and function

of manifestation, but do not affect their inner station of Reality and Oneness with the All-Source; and pertain to the illumination manifest in them, but not to the Essence whence that illumination proceeds and to which they all have the same relationship. Forasmuch as the Essence is hidden in its own Reality and incomprehensible in its own innermost Identity, therefore, in order to understand these matters, a seeker and striver after truth must needs consider that which every Prophet has explained in His Book concerning His station, and understand the names and titles which He has assigned to Himself.

As to Moses and the Israelitish prophets (peace be upon them!), one fact is evident in their books and prophecies. If we study the Old Testament we find that after law, ordinances and some prophecies concerning Tyre, Sidon, Egypt, etc., the only thing recorded therein is but one solid and important message. It is this, that, verily the Israelitish Kingdom will be utterly destroyed in the Holy Land and the tribes will be scattered to all parts of the earth, where they will taste the bitterness of lowliness and abasement, and undergo great affliction and terrible calamities. The days of their tribulations will be prolonged, as a consequence of their sins and crimes, until the coming of the Lord, when He will arise to save them from such extreme degradation, free them from captivity, gather their scattered ones, restore to them their former abodes, and plant them in their original dwellings,—an abiding which will not be

followed by any dispersion or removal, and a growth which will not undergo any extirpation or distress.

The Book of every Prophet, without exception, contains clear warnings regarding the long degradation which will befall the Israelites; announces to them the coming of the Day of the Glorious Lord, and their deliverance from violent torture. Naught is heard from the books of the Old Testament except the melodies of the Birds of Sanctity for the Manifestation of the Beneficent Lord; the cooings of the Doves of Peace concerning the signs of that Great Day, and the deliverance of the Children of Israel from painful affliction. Therefore, it is not possible to consider the appearances of these Prophets to be the Manifestation of the Promised Lord, nor their days to be the Day of the Glorious Lord.

As to Christ (Glory be to Him!), He did not claim that His appearance was that of God; nay, rather, He clearly stated Himself to be the Son of God. Neither did He claim His day to be the Day of God, but expressed Himself as a herald of its coming and approach, as is shown by His words:—"Repent ye, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." Nor did He announce to the Israelites any honor and dominion, but rather warned them against the approach of their long abasement and violent desolation, as is clearly shown in the Gospel of St. Matt. (ch. xxiii., 37-39):—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often

would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Whosoever studies and searches the texts of the Gospels and the Epistles of the Apostles, will find that they are all in perfect harmony with what is recorded in the books of the Israelitish prophets, regarding the coming of the Day of God, its signs and events. Therefore, it is not possible to interpret Christ's appearance into the words of the Israelitish prophets which announce the coming of the Glorious Day of God, the illumining of the earth with the lights of His Beautiful Face and emancipation of the Children of Abraham from their long degradation.

As to Mohammed, His title, "the Seal of the Prophets," clearly demonstrates that His appearance was not the Manifestation of God, nor was His day the Day of God. He commanded the world of Islam to call out, five times a day, the formula, "I testify that, verily, Mohammed is the Messenger of God!" Moreover, one-third of the Koran consists of prophecies concerning the approach of the Day of God's coming, and signs foreshadowing the near arrival of the Cause of God.

As to the Most Great Bab, the glorious Precursor, the First Point, the Supreme Model (Glorified is His Most Mighty Exalted Name!), this is a suf-

ficient fact, that He hath entitled Himself "the Bab," which refers to His being the Gate of the Manifestation of God; and He hath foreshadowed the coming of the Promised One in the name of "He whom God shall manifest." He has alluded to, nay rather, clearly stated in the 3d chapter of the sixth Unit of the Book of Beyan, that verily His Holiness the Promised One will appear at the term of 19 years after His own glorious Rise. In the same book He says His advent was to make the way straight before the Manifestation of God, and to prepare the path for the coming of "He whom God shall manifest."

Consequently, on account of the facts that we have clearly explained, it is impossible to hold that the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures and the Divine Books are fulfilled in any other than Beha-Ullah-El-Abha, and in His Supreme and Most Holy Dawn. He (Exalted and Glorified is His Name!) hath alone claimed that, verily His Appearance is the promised Manifestation of God, His Face is the Face of God the Adored, and His Day is the appointed Day of God.

Prudent is he who considers this Supreme Truth and lofty Aim! Verily, unto God will be the end of all! He is the Lord of the Next World and the present one!

The Second Introduction.

Treating of the meaning of Divine Unity, the disagreement of the nations as to the way of understanding It and the manner of Its demonstration.

O ye people of Beha! May God illumine your insight with the Lights shining from the Beha of His Face! Know, verily the nations have unanimously agreed in confessing the Oneness of the Essence of God the Exalted; but learned doctors have disagreed in understanding its meaning and the explanation of its import.

Verily the Pagans acknowledge and believe in the Oneness of God and in His Singleness, even as the Jews, Christians and the people of Islam have confessed.

If ye should question any Buddhist, Brahmanist, or Sabeian, concerning God the Exalted, he will, without consideration or hesitation, answer, that he believes in one God who is perfect in all His attributes and free from every imperfection; and that idols and images are no other than the visible representations of that Holy Essence; dawning places of that One Reality; channels through which the Divine Bounties are gained; or intermediaries for worshipping that Invisible Identity.

These idols and images, as is known to the doctors of archæology, are none other than images of men who arose in bygone days and instituted a

belief or performed glorious deeds among the ancient nations. As a confirmatory evidence of this statement, see Mosheim's "History of the Church" (Book I., Cent. I., Part I., par. 9):—"The greater part of the gods of all nations were ancient heroes, famous for their achievements and their worthy deeds; such as kings, generals, and founders of cities; and likewise females who were highly distinguished for their deeds and discoveries, whom a grateful posterity had deified."

It is clear, therefore, that the doctors, philosophers, priests and jurists first placed these idols and images in their temples and homes as memorials of their ancestors and heroes, to continue their remembrance, show their gratitude and do honor to their persons, until finally, visiting and paying homage to these images became a part of their worship, and adoration of them became an essential part of their religions. With the lapse of time their superstitions brought astonishing events and great performances, such as signs and miracles, into their worship of these images, as is witnessed by the usage of the common people in every religion.

Briefly, the plurality of the gods of the idolaters does not contradict their acknowledgment of the Oneness of God, even as the doctrine of Trinity, held by Christians, is not contradictory to their belief in the Unity and Singleness of God the Most High. Verily all the Christian peoples are of one accord in believing in the Oneness of the Essence of God, notwithstanding their belief in

the plurality of the Trinity and the difference of names and meanings therein.

It is evident from the Holy Scriptures that the ancient Sabeans considered their spiritual men as gods. To explain it more clearly; just as the Christians regard their illuminated exponents as "saints," and Mussulmans reverence their great spiritual men as "owleya" (holy ones), so likewise the Sabeans considered their heroes as gods. The purpose and meaning of the word "god" to idolaters is therefore the same as that intended by the word "saint" to the Christians, and as the title "holy ones of God" to Islam. This fact is proved by the verse of the Acts, ch. xxviii.:—"And when Paul (in the island of Melita) had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand . . . ; but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god." By this they meant that he was one of the "holy ones" of God, or one of the "saints," because they witnessed in him such an evident wonder; even as would be the case among villagers and rustics of the present time. The same meaning is alluded to in the 1st verse of Psalm lxxxii., thus:—"God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods." This means that God the Exalted will stand, judge and rule in the congregation of the saints. This also corresponds perfectly with that which is revealed

in many other places in the Holy Scriptures; such as in Jude, v. 14:—"Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints." It is also recorded in Psalm lxxxii, vs. 6, 7:—"I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the Most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes."

All these verses clearly indicate that by "gods" is meant "saints." The interpretation thereof is that verily God the Exalted wished that His Chosen Ones should possess piety and sanctity; therefore He elected them to be His holy ones; but they fell into tests, because, like other princes, they persisted in pernicious and ruinous ideas. By the two blessed verses is meant the chiefs of the Nakazeen (the violators of the Covenant) and the leaders of the companions of the "left hand," who are plunged into the depths of error. They claimed to be the sons of God, and that their Lord has chosen them for Himself; but they have fallen, in violation of the Covenant of God. In the same Psalm, David (Peace be upon him!) has recorded prophecies concerning the Manifestation of God and referred to the signs of the Day of God; as is proved by the last verse:—"Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations."

It is, therefore, clearly evident that among the bygone peoples the word "god" signified "saints" to the Christians, and "holy ones" to the Moslems. This form was introduced into the verses of the Holy Scriptures and used by the Israelitish prophets in some passages to which we have al-

luded when quoting the verses of the Psalms; inasmuch as this was, in those days, one of the prevalent words or usual terms adapted from idolaters and Sabeans. The words of God have always been revealed in accordance with the language of people, so that the benefit thereof may become universal; which fact is evident to the discerning and to such as have the knowledge of the Book.

The Israelitish people, early in their cycle and in the beginning of their rise, applied the word "prophet" to their religious chiefs; because in those times religious leaders were accustomed to interpret dreams, and people relied upon them as men who were inspired in visions. Those ancient days were, as we have recorded in the former introduction, as the dark and gloomy night, on account of the agglomeration of fictitious beliefs, the gloom of pagan tenets, and natural trend to barbarism; for Sabeanism and Paganism were then prevalent in all states and regions. It was as though darkness prevailed in all parts of the earth, except the Syrian countries, which were at that time planting-ground for the tree of Prophethood, and the dawning-place of the light of Unity and Guidance. As darkness then dominated all parts of the earth, the prophets therefore considered those days as the "dark night" in the cycles of the world, and symbolized them by the word "gloomy night," which term they applied to them in numerous places in their writings. It was in accord with such conditions that revelation and inspira-

tion came to them in "dreams," and so explanation of visions was considered important. They even applied the word "dreamer" to a prophet, as is clearly manifest in many passages in the Holy Scriptures; and thus the word "prophet" came into common use and was applied to all who had significant dreams among the Israelitish nation. From them, this term found its way among the Arabs, and became of current usage in the religion of Islam.

From the above-mentioned statements, it is clearly evident that the term "god" to the idolaters, "prophet" to the Israelites, "saint" to the Christians, and "holy one" to the Mussulmans, has been used and applied in the same sense of religious leaders, whom these creeds regarded as the nearest of men to God the Exalted, and the only ones who were considered as esteemed before Him.

Since the nations unanimously agree upon the Unity of God, and that the gods, prophets, saints or holy ones,—according to the difference between languages, interpretations, and terminologies,—are none other than the means of attainment to Spiritual Bounties from the One Reality of God; it proves that these leaders were only the Manifestations of power for the institution of Divine Laws among mankind. Now let it be known that verily different doctors in every creed have explained the essential Unity of the Almighty God in diverse ways, and have respectively demonstrated it by logical, scriptural or inspirational

proofs. The philosophers and theorists of every nation rely upon logical proofs and analogical reasoning, in demonstrating the existence of the Self-existent One, and in proving His Unity and Oneness. But the theologians and divines rest upon authoritative proofs, which, they maintain, are derived from Heavenly Books. Thus, the Jewish doctors rely upon the texts of the Old Testament, the theologians of Christianity trust in the texts of the Gospels, and the Mussulman doctors of theology hold to the words of the Koran. Such is the case with all the religions and creeds. All the extant religions clearly state in their Heavenly Books the Oneness of God the Exalted, His Singleness, and that He is far above being associated or classed with His creatures. All these logical or scriptural proofs which the doctors of every creed use in demonstrating the existence of God, His Unity and Singleness,—provided we suppose them to have any efficacy in proving their purpose, and granted they can prove the truth of their assertion,—cannot go beyond demonstrating the conception of an absolute and indefinite God. In other words, these proofs and arguments do not impart the knowledge of God, but only impart the understanding of the existence of God. Knowledge of the existence of God is other than the knowledge of God,—the Glorified, the Great. The difference between the knowledge of God and the knowledge of the existence of God is evident to the intelligent, and the great divergence between the custodians of these two knowl-

edges is clear to the men of perception. A man who has the knowledge of the existence of God and not that of God, resembles a man who knows and believes in the existence of a precious stone called ruby, but who does not know the ruby itself, nor can he distinguish between it and other stones. Such a man is frequently cheated; and buys a base and worthless stone or colored glass instead of ruby. But a man who has the knowledge of God, is like one who knows the ruby with real knowledge of its qualities, and distinguishes between it and other stones with due discrimination. Such a man will not be deluded by the misrepresentations of the dishonest, nor deceived by the sellers and tradesmen.

Hence many nations have been misled and many peoples deceived, mistaking devils for saints, worshipping idols and falsely denying the Prophets. They never worshipped the devil except in the name of God the Exalted. This is alluded to in St. Matt. (ch. xxiv.), and clearly expressed in the 2nd chap., Second Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians.

As to the people of Beha, the companions of the Red Ark, who have attained knowledge of the realities of Oneness, from the traces of the Supreme Pen; who have taken the lesson of Unity from the rustle of the Sadrat-ul-Muntaha, and have studied the problems of Singleness in the Chambers of the Schools of Paradise, through the melodies of their Lord the Abha; they believe that the Essence of God the Exalted is an im-

pregnable, invisible One, a hidden treasury, absolutely single in its Identity and Reality. Therefore it is not possible to qualify It with any qualifications of ingress or egress, ascent or descent, occupancy or possession, concealment or exposure, absence or presence, rest or motion, advance or withdrawal, or with other similar qualities and attributes, peculiarities or grades. These are the characteristics and attributes of matter, while the Essence of God is abstracted therefrom, and is in Its Identity contrary to and far above being qualified by its qualities or specified by its descriptions. Neither can It be defined by any definitions, referred to by any reference, nor determined by the application of any pronoun; because names, attributes, peculiarities and praises befit only a thing which can be perceived through and apprehended by physical senses. It is beyond the power of mind to apprehend a general subject except by investigating particulars, studying the qualities of individuals, and deducing from them general forms and logical meanings. But an abstract cannot be apprehended by any of the physical senses. Therefore it is utterly impossible for the mind to assign to it any especial character, or to particularize it by any name or definite attribute. All that man may think of this state is but imagination and has no connection whatever with any definite truths or real conceptions.

Consequently it is recorded in the writings of certain Oriental saints, rebuking those who were discussing the Divine Essence, thus: "All that ye

distinguish through your imagination, in its most subtle meanings, is a creation like yourselves, and returns to yourselves only."

As it is proved that the way to the comprehension of the Essence is closed, and that it is impossible for us to reach its depth, therefore God the Exalted has created a glorious person among mankind for the manifestation of this holy Essence and sole Reality. He has selected a precious Gem among the pure gems of humanity, for the showing forth of Its light and traces, so that He may be as a throne for His Essence, a horizon for the rising of the lights of His Splendor, a manifester of His hidden Reality, an emanator of His invisible Identity, a recipient of His Names and Attributes, a tongue to reveal His Revelation and Inspiration, a channel for His Laws and Ordinances, an elucidator of His Signs and Evidences, and a deliverer of His Commands and Messages. By Him, God manifests, in the first grade and primary station, His Knowledge, Wisdom, Power, Dominion, Grandeur, Unity, Will, Beauty, Glory, Grace, Perfection, Mercy and Beneficence. He (the Manifestation) is named by all the mighty Names revealed in the Divine Books, and is the subject of the prophetic melodies recorded in the Heavenly Scriptures. He is the "Spirit of God sent down," the prevailing "Word," the brilliant "Face of God," "His outstretched hand"; He is the eloquent "Tongue of God," "His discerning Eye"; He is the "Preserved Tablet," the "Supreme Pen," the "Manifest Horizon," the "Outlook of El-Abha";

He is the "Great Throne," "the Lofty Seat," the "Everlasting Paradise," the "Sadrat-ul-Muntaha." "By whatever title He may be called, His are the most comely names."

Such an excellent Person, glorious Man, preserved Gem, and Greatest Name must needs exist in every cycle, age and time,—as is asserted by Prophets and Messengers,—in order to be the Temple for the worship of God. He is the Channel of the Knowledge of God; so that the proofs of God, His evidences and signs may not be void, the Path of Unity and Oneness may not be concealed, the breeze of Devotion and Sanctity may not be hushed, the door of Faith and Assurance may not be closed, and that mankind may not be finally lost in barbarism.

A sound judgment also considers the truth of this fact; that interruption of effects from an abstract (the first Cause), is unreasonable, and that it is utterly impossible for any action to issue from an abstract, except through the instrumentality of bodies (matter). This is evident to such as are grounded in logical arguments, and are gifted with brilliant sight in Divine and natural enlightenments. The essential Oneness is not invalidated by the plurality of its manifestations, nor is the sun made manifold by the number of its dawning-places. The spirit of anyone of mankind is not multiplied nor altered by the change of his body, that is, by the transformation of the substance of his organism, from his earliest childhood and youth until his decrepitude and decline. For the only

thing to rely upon in the realization of Identity and the demonstration of Oneness, is the unity of the Spirit, and not of the body. As already mentioned, bodies are but instruments for the Essence. Neither does the Essence of God the Exalted become plural by manifesting Itself in plural manifestations. Believing in Oneness is to recognize that Single Essence in numerous manifestations; and Faith in Unity is to seek light from the One Sun of Truth through Its manifold day-springs. Therefore, we find many passages in the Holy Scriptures, in which the Manifestations of God are considered as one person, in regard to the Oneness of the Essence and the Divine Spirit, although they are different and varying in names, forms, places and times. Their laws and religions are, therefore, considered as one law and one religion, in respect to the Oneness of the Institutor and the Founder of those laws, notwithstanding their difference in precepts, ordinances, rites and ceremonies. The Spirit (Christ, Glory be upon Him!) has declared John, the son of Zacharias (peace be upon him!), to be Elias the Prophet, saying:—"And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Likewise, the same fact is recorded in St. Matt., ch. ii., and in numerous other passages in the former Books. In reference to this point, the elect and favored saint, Peter the Apostle has said in his First Epistle (ch. i., vs. 10, 11):—"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should

come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

Consider,—may God assist ye,—how it is clearly stated that the Spirit speaking through the prophets, was the same spirit in Christ (Glory and Beha be upon Him!). This is the clearest proof of the Unity of that excellent Reality, and of the fact that He will not become pluralized by the number of His Manifestations. This verse has no reference to the false and ridiculous idea of transmigration and reincarnation, into which pitfall the footsteps of a great number of simple people have slipped, and in which notion multitudes among the past and present nations persevere.

The Spirit of God is the One Abstract Identity in every respect. In this It is contrary to human spirits and human mental faculties, which are separate in individuality and identity. That which returns of beings is their generic form and the qualities and signs pertaining to it; not the individual form and that which is in connection with it of characteristics and personal particularities. By the return of the Holy Reality is meant the return of the Essence which is One in every respect, and the manifestation of the Identity which is single in essence. It is the Exalted Reality and the excellent Essence, the center of the circle of Names, and the Spirit of God descended from heaven, through the knowledge of which the realities of things are unfolded, and the secrets of hearts

disclosed in the world of Creation. The believers in Divine Unity are thereby distinguished from polytheists, the convinced from sceptical, the truthful from the false, and the firm from the vacillating. When such a holy Essence manifests itself in a body, and this sun of Truth shining forth from a dawning-place is denied, opposed, rejected, turned aside from or disputed by an ignorant and heedless one, such a person may not be truly named a believer in Unity, and his knowledge of the existence of the Essence will not benefit him. For his belief has not transcended the limit of imagination, and his knowledge of the existence of a god is only an indefinite knowledge. By understanding this abstruse subject, it will become evident why the term, "believer in Unity," is not true of some nations and religions (e.g. Sabceans), although they may believe in one God. Likewise, the difference between the knowledge of God and the knowledge of the existence of God will become manifest, as we have already explained. Verily, the knowledge of each one of the aforesaid nations terminates either in what is created by their own superstitions about the Essence of God, even though they are philosophers and doctors, or in their knowledge of one of the former Day-springs and Dawning-places, even though they are blind and simple followers.

Therefore, according to our demonstration, it is proved that such a degree of knowledge of the state of Divine Unity is not sufficient, nor can one rely upon this knowledge as complete; nor can one

trust in it against being snared in the toils of devil-worship. Likewise, the meaning of "Return" will be clearly understood, whereat the minds of nations are astonished, and whereby people are tested. All former and present nations have been and are awaiting the return of some certain person or persons who have existed in bygone ages, expecting them to appear in the "latter days," as a fulfillment of their prophecies. The Jews believe in the return of Elias the Prophet. Among the Mohammedans, the Shi'ah sect trust in the return of Hussein the son of Ali (the 3rd Imam), and Mohammed the son of Hassan Askari (12th Imam). The Christians as well as the Sunnite sect of Islam believe that Christ will return at the end of the days; which fact is known to such as are informed upon the doctrines of religions.

By "Return," is meant the return of the Manifestation of that Sacred Reality. "Resurrection" is the rise of Its Appearance and Dawning-place among mankind. By the "Hour" is intended the hour of Its dawn and rising, after Its disappearance. But the "Return" and "Resurrection," if they are taken according to the meaning which people believe and nations await, is an unintelligible matter, inasmuch as it is contrary to the natural laws, and against the Divine Sentences:—"Thou shalt not find any change in the sentence of God," nor will there be any change in the laws whereupon God hath based His Creation.

Such glorious Manifestation and great Man is known and distinguished from the rest of mankind

by the Attributes of God which proceed from Him, and by the qualities and characteristics of God which appear through Him. From Him shine Knowledge and Wisdom, Glory and Majesty, Power and Might, Sway and Dominion, and other attributes of excellence and qualities of Perfection, without His having acquired knowledge by study in scientific schools. Nor have His Power, Dominion, Grandeur and Sway been assisted by any material kingdom or ruler, or by financial wealth and affluence; or through any family connection and support. This is the case with His other qualifications, dispositions and conditions. Nay, rather, all these endowments and attributes are manifest in Him in His Identity, and are confirmed through His Words and Verses. He is, in every one of His attributes, a miracle to others. He puts to silence and discomfits such as may arise to resist and oppose Him. The most particular and clear among His Attributes is the Mighty Power which proceeds from Him in instituting laws and religions, and in promoting and establishing them throughout the world. Through these, every possessor of authority and power who may oppose or antagonize Him is abased. This is an incomparable Power among nations, and is a glorious dominion and kingdom which can never be vanquished by any in the world. For though kings have long wrestled with it, they were beaten; and though doctors and prominent men withstood it, they were discomfited. Because, love for an old and familiar religion is firmly rooted in the hearts

of all the people, and dying for its preservation, and suffering ruin in opposing its removal, is a well-known characteristic of all the nations.

When anyone appeared, claiming to be the Prophet of God, bringing a glorious Book and declaring it to be the Book of God, two manifest powers and evident energies proceeded from Him and His Book. First, a Knowledge, whereby all the sicknesses of nations were removed; because it changed their infidelity into belief in unity, their faithlessness into faith, their ignorance into wisdom, their discord into harmony, their hostility into love, and their treachery into trustworthiness. So also it transformed their other attributes, manners and qualifications.

Second, a Power whereby the world was subdued, notwithstanding all the people, including the prophet's own relatives and family, resisted it; just as the Jews and others withstood the spread of Christianity.

Consequently, there is no ground for doubt as to the truth of His claim and the reality of His Word, nor as to the necessity of obeying Him. Verily His power and might are connected with the Holy Omnipotence, are caused by the Invisible Power proceeding from the Divine Essence, and have descended from the Exalted and Heavenly Reality. There is no doubt that a new religion is an outcome and result which must needs have a cause and reason. As all material causes, such as acquired sciences, outward dominion and power, financial riches and family influence have been lack-

ing, therefore no thoughtful person, not even the philosophers who believe in reasons and effects, would doubt that these powers are caused by the Reason of reasons and the Cause of causes. That is, they have proceeded from the Divine Essence, the Heavenly Reality, and Supreme Identity, which is interpreted to be the "Self-Existent One" (Glorified is His Grandeur and Exalted is His Station!)

This glorious Man, whom we have mentioned and described,—while He is exalted and magnified above being praised by any praises,—in His oneness expresses the Oneness of God; in His desire, the Desire of God; in His will, the Will of God; in all of His names and attributes, the Names and Attributes of God. Knowing Him, therefore, is knowing God, obeying Him is obeying God, rejecting and falsely denying Him is, therefore, identical with rejecting and falsely denying God.

This is the real theory of Unity, the ideal and confirmed knowledge of Oneness. All else is but polytheism of the infidel, imagination of the superstitious, gloomy thought of the so-called philosophers, and erroneous ideas of religious usurpers.

Praise be to God, the Lord of the Creatures!

The Third Introduction.

Treating of the proofs and arguments which prove the truth of the Divine Manifestations:—

O ye people of Beha, firm ones in the Covenant of “Him around Whom all names revolve”! May God quicken your hearts through the fountain of His Gifts which are pouring from His Glorious Reality! Know ye that one of the subjects upon which all nations have agreed, is the fact that there has ever been in the world the appearance of a truth and a falsehood, the rise of a guide and a misleader, the true claim and the false one, the call of the Lord and that of a Satan. In other words, many men have arisen in the past and perhaps others will arise in the future, claiming to have appeared by the permission of God and arisen by the Command of God; men who were true in their claim and right in their words. On the other hand, many others have falsely and erroneously made the same claim.

There must be of necessity certain signs and tokens in a Divine claimant and in every Manifestation of Truth, which signs and tokens may confirm the truth of His claim. Likewise there must be proofs, arguments and evidences to establish the validity of His words, so that Truth may be distinguished from falsehood, a guide from a misleader, and the right path from the wrong; so

that the Lord may be differentiated from Satan, and proofs may be made perfect to all in the Universe.

Then know (may God assist ye!), we have stated and proved in the previous introduction, that verily the Manifestations of the Cause of God are the Manifestations of One Reality and One Essence, and that all of them are considered as one man and one person. Their first is identical with their last; their former with their latter; they are only distinguished from each other through the Attributes of God which appear from them, and the Essence of God which is manifest within them. From this it follows that the way of knowing them, the proof of their truth, the evidence of the validity of their claim, and the argument for the demonstration of their Word, should be also one. For these tokens, signs, proofs and arguments are no other than the signs of the Divine Attributes, which are manifest in them, and are similar to the rays and lights gleaming from the Sun of Truth. As the Sun is one, its light must needs be one, and the rays which shine from it must be also alike and similar. But of these Manifestations, those who appear later or nearer to the end, that is, nearer to the Great Resurrection and Glorious Hour, are of a greater brilliancy and splendor, and their proofs and arguments are clearer and stronger, on account of the law of progression. This point may be clearly understood by investigating the proofs of the reality of religions which have appeared in former times.

These proofs and arguments, although they cannot be confined within definite limits, as we have already said, are, in reality, the signs of the Divine Attributes which are manifest in the Manifestations of God, and are as lights which gleam from the Sun of the Truth of His Essence. Yet the proofs held by the adherents of religions and laws, and which are produced in case of demonstration as being the clearest and most evident, are four in number.

First, the Heavenly Revelation, that is, the Divine Book. Second, the Logical Proof or Argument (called by Mohammedan Theologians the "Proof of Stability"). Third, Signs and Miracles. Fourth, Prophecies and Records (of previous Books).

In the following, we briefly treat of the reality of these proofs and the manner in which they demonstrate the Manifestation of the Command of God; while trusting in God, the aim of the pious and the Illuminator of Sight and Insight.

FIRST PROOF; THAT IS, THE HEAVENLY REVELATION AND DIVINE UTTERANCE:—This signifies the truths which are revealed to the heart of the Manifestation of the Command of God, through the mediation of the Holy Spirit of God manifest within Him; truths given forth from His tongue; knowledge cast in the mould of words, through His Utterance and Explanation. This definition proves that, verily, the Divine Words and scriptural Verses are the first Bounty which pours

forth from the Merciful Reality, and are the highest and greatest Gift which is sent down and bestowed upon human beings. These Words and Verses are like unto the dew and the heavenly rains. They descend from the clouds of Holy Temples (prophets), and the old world is clad with the new garment of youth through their descent and fall. They are the rays of the Sun of Truth which dawn from Holy Day-Springs, dispelling the darkness of ignorance and superstition. They are the Breezes of the Spring-time of Manifestation, the Fragrances of the Morn of Resurrection, throughout time and ages. By them the sweet odor of Knowledge is diffused in the Universe, and the Spirit of Life is breathed into laws and religions. They are rivers flowing from the fountains of Divine Wisdom into that ever fresh and verdant spiritual Garden. By their pure, livings waters the filth of barbarism and coarseness is abolished and the graces of civilization and enlightenment appear.

The Words of God have clear preference and manifest grandeur above all other proofs and arguments; inasmuch as they are everlasting signs, and can easily be reached by every one. In this respect they differ from works and miracles, which are temporary and vanishing, and cannot be transferred to remote countries and distant lands. The Words are the greatest proof of the Prophets, inasmuch as nothing in the world is more highly esteemed and valued than knowledge. The depository of knowledge is the Book, as is evident to

all men of understanding. It is through the Words of God that the benefits of training and education are realized, regulations are enacted, and laws are instituted. These laws constitute the basis upon which the refinement of peoples, civilizations of nations, preservation of society, and culture of the world, are founded.

Let us take for granted that Moses (Peace be upon Him!) has, as is believed by the Jews, cloven the sea, brought forth water from the rock, changed his rod into a crawling serpent, and manifested other great signs. Let us concede that Christ (Glory be to Him!) has quickened the dead, restored those born blind, and cured lunatics. How can all these wonders be of any value when compared with the Gospels and the Bible? Verily these, even though they might be literally true, were witnessed by a limited number of men, whereas the lights of the Heavenly Books are shining, their signs are radiating, their hymns and verses are sung, their psalms and prophecies chanted, throughout all lands and regions, during cycles and ages. Every reader reads them, every hearer hears them, every seeker finds them, and every man of capacity is profited by them. Through them insight is illumined, eyes are consoled, morals are reformed, souls are quickened, and hearts and breasts are dilated.

The Words of God are not distinguished and known from the words of man by their eloquence, fluency, composition, harmonious phrases, nor by the grace of their allegories, as is

maintained by some people. Neither are they supported by the testimony of ancient monuments and relics, as is held by certain classes; nor by beliefs which people have inherited from their ancestors and great men, and to which beliefs they have submitted in blind imitation, considering them indisputable truth, as is the case in all religions. As all such views would be ignored by the majority of the people, and could not be demonstrated to the world as being a perfect proof and a satisfactory argument; therefore, accepting them would be only through blind imitation and taking the words of others, without any proof upon which wise men could rely.

The people of Beha, who cling to the Hem of "Him around Whom all names revolve," distinguish the Words of God from the words of man, through their perfect efficacy in the guidance of souls, enlightenment of hearts, quickening of nations, reformation of character, reorganization of society, institution of wonderful, everlasting and refining laws, overthrow of such proud people as may resist them, and domination over whatever tyrant nations may prevent or antagonize them. The Behaïs name this quality the "creative and dominating power," which differentiates the Divine Words from those invented by man.

For it is evident to every discerning and prudent man, that, verily, the mission of Prophets, the arising of Messengers, the institution of laws, and the enactment of regulations, are only for the guidance of souls and the removal of spiritual

sicknesses, just as medical science is for the healing of physical sicknesses and the preservation of bodies. When a prophet appears with a Divine Book, whereby souls are guided, hearts are quickened, infidelity changed into belief in Unity, uncertainty into faith, rebellion into obedience, ignorance into knowledge and wisdom, hatred into love and affinity, to such an extent that He founds a living, independent and everlasting community, and institutes a reforming and guiding law; then there can be no doubt that such a book is the Book of God; that the Revealer thereof is appointed by the Command of God, and is assisted and fortified by the Spirit of God. Because the guidance of men is a function which belongs to a prophet and is a confirmatory proof of His Prophethood, even as the power of curing sickness and establishing health is a quality pertaining to medical science, and an evidence of the claim of the physician. To this point the Words of our Lord Christ have reference, in the 12th ch. St. Matt.,—"The tree is known by his fruit." For it is unreasonable to believe that peace and harmony should proceed from the source of falsehood and corruption, or that a tree of error and misleading should bring forth the fruits of happiness and guidance.

In Deuteronomy, ch. xviii., God, referring to the appearance of Prophets and the rise of claimants, both false and true, has clearly indicated that the only rule by which to discriminate between them is the efficacy of their words and the penetrating

power of their speech, in guiding souls and illuminating hearts; in uplifting nations and refining peoples (v. 21):—"And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken?" (v. 22) "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him."

Now consider (May God the Exalted assist ye!) how He has appointed the correct standard for the distinction between false and true to be the inefficiency of the words of the false one. Likewise note that He has not made eloquence, miracles, or the testimony of antique monuments, distinguishing proofs. The above-mentioned verses do not exclusively refer to prophecies of future events, as some commentators say, because if they did, people might be excused for their lack of faith before the fulfillment of the prophecies, and thus the words of the Prophets would not establish a Religion, nor could they be demonstrated by any proofs or arguments. But their effectiveness and power is the only distinction and single standard; the clear sign by which to distinguish the Words of the Glorious Lord from the words of man. Even the first one who has believed in a true Prophet and acknowledged a real claim, would not have believed in nor submitted to His Station had he not realized in himself the manifest guidance and evident power in that Prophet's Words.

Consider the condition of the Hebrew nation before the appearance of Moses (Peace be upon Him!). Compare their state of baseness and humility, slavery and shame, to their condition after the appearance of Moses and the Bible's Revelation. Their circumstances and manners were vastly improved, and they produced kings, rulers, and great prophets. Thus we are able to realize some of the signs of the revelation of Divine Words, and see how much they effected in bringing nations from darkness to light, from death to life, from barbarism to civilization and refinement. Likewise the records of all nations and peoples east and west, who have embraced the Heavenly Religions, will show how the downpour of the Shower of Revelation from the Clouds of the Divine Providence has taken effect in them. That which is revealed in the 55th ch. Isaiah as reference to this fact:—(v. 8.) "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." (v. 9.) "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (v. 10.) "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:" (v. 11.) "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." This suffices the

people of faith, and is enough to satisfy the people of Assurance. Time and circumstances do not permit further enlargement. Therefore, we trust in God the Lord, and rely upon Him, both in the origin and end.

SECOND OR LOGICAL PROOF:—That Mighty Divine Power and Heavenly Energy to which we have alluded, and which has been explained in a brief way in former passages, is a Power which institutes a new law and a new religion. This Power is not assisted by any material or phenomenal kingdom or authority, nor by any glory, majesty, family influence, financial wealth or affluence. When we find such a resistless Power triumphing unassisted by any such instrumentality, we may conclude that undoubtedly it owes its origin to the Cause of causes and the Reason of reasons, that is to the Divine Will, the Supreme Pleasure, the Essential Invisible Power. Otherwise, things would be the outcome of a concatenation of causes, which theory is held as false and unreasonable by great philosophers and by pillars of learning and wisdom.

The explanation of this argument in detail is, that this great Power and manifest Potency, which proceeds from the Institutor of a new Religion, must, of necessity, have a rational cause and reason. Philosophers seek reasons and inquire about causes. Now a religion is necessarily an effect; and the idea of a new religion being outside causation is absurd, for every one would most decidedly refuse to embrace it. But this penetrative

Power which founds a new religion resists the efforts of all the people of the world, and subdues and overcomes all nations; this action, therefore, must needs have a cause; this remarkable phenomenon and manifest Power must have an origin and motive.

If it be said that this Power which organizes new religions and preserves them for long periods, is reinforced by any family influence, we find that this motive is absent in such cases, and thus cannot be an origin and source for the appearance of this strong Power. The lack of this influence in Christianity is too evident a fact to leave any ground for doubt; inasmuch as the relatives of our Lord Christ (Peace be upon Him!) were of the Jews, who, after the lapse of so many centuries and generations, are still denying His religion, and are the strongest antagonists of His Name among the nations.

As to the Religion of Moses, the Bible testifies, —in spite of the obscurity of the old histories and the discord of the historians as to the compiler of the five books of Moses,—that the Israelites were antagonistic to the mission of Moses, and disputed most of His actions, until finally they were about to stone Him for the manifold calamities and afflictions which they suffered through the oppressions of the Pharaohs and the hostility of the Egyptians. In such a case it is impossible that this wonderful Power which causes the institution of a new religion should be assisted by family co-operation or produced by the help of kindred.

The cause of this manifest hatred and opposition, this evident enmity and hostility to a new religion, is clear to men of insight. Verily, the disease which pervades and attacks all religions is the idea held by their respective adherents that their laws are unalterable and everlasting.

The Jews, Christians and Mussulmans regard their respective law and religion as being everlasting and permanent, never allowing any of its ordinances to be changed. Great numbers among them have given up their lives and properties, and forsaken their families and children to preserve their ordinances and texts. This is also the case with the Sabeans and other Pagan peoples. Thus everybody hates and dislikes to relinquish his hereditary religion and embrace a new faith. This is the case with all people, no matter whether they are related to the Prophet or are strangers, enemies or friends, obscure or distinguished.

A man can rarely be found who is in himself awakened to the fact that the institutor of a new religion and the appearance of a Manifestation is appointed by the Command of God; that such a Manifestation declares Himself by the permission of God, and fulfills the Will of God; that He enacts laws and ordinances applicable to the occasion, circumstances, places and times, and not in conformity with the various opinions, wishes and ideas of peoples and nations, and the difference of their beliefs and understandings.

From the above statements, we can understand how false is the view Ebn-Kaldoon (a famous

Oriental historian) has sustained, that a religious claim can never stand firm nor be accomplished except by family influence. He supports his statement by the following obscure tradition:—

“God never raised a prophet except in the guardianship of his relatives.”

This writer has imagined that the penetration of the Divine Word and the maintenance of a prophetic claim depend upon the influence of relatives, and not upon any Heavenly Invisible Power. From this tradition he has regarded the prophecies concerning the appearance of Mahdi (the Precursor) as invalid, because of the dissolution of the Hashemite lineage and the dispersion of the Ali-ite race. This is contrary to the clear records of the Heavenly Books, and contradictory to the testimony of history.

It is sometimes said that this Power which institutes new laws has been aided by acquired learning and school sciences; that is, that the founders of Divine Religions have been instructed by prominent learned men, and have thus mastered the various branches of learning, such as Philosophy, Natural Sciences, Astronomy, Geometry, Arithmetic, Geography, etc. On this account the learned men are made humble before them, and the minds of the philosophers are illumined through their enlightenment, and so the common and ignorant have followed and obeyed them. But we find that even this has been wanting in connection with the prophets. If this statement cannot be realized in the case of Moses (Peace be

upon Him!), on account of the obscurity of ancient history, which is beyond the reach of discovery and research, yet it is very clear and explicit in regard to the Manifestation of our Lord Christ. He was never educated in the contemporary schools of Greece and Egypt. He had not undertaken to study their sciences and philosophies, nor is there any book attributed to Him containing such learning. No record or history testifies that Christ was numbered among the learned of His Age, or accounted a philosopher or doctor. Moreover, there is no likeness between the knowledge which hath proceeded from the Holy Manifestations and the acquired human sciences; inasmuch as the former is spiritual, quickening spirits and souls, and healing the sicknesses of minds and hearts, while the latter is material, and its use is for definite objects and limited applications pertaining to matter. The uses of Geometry, for instance, are applied to the knowledge of surfaces, those of Arithmetic to numbers, those of Medicine to the health of bodies. So also with other sciences and learnings, as is clear and evident.

It is certain that the Greek and Egyptian philosophers and the Persian and Chaldean doctors, who were, in those days, the sources of these sciences, could not deliver themselves, their neighbors and their colonists from the fetters of corrupt beliefs, or purify them from the filth of shameful practices. History shows the prevalence of such customs as offering children in sacrifice before idols, worshipping animals, trees and rivers; violat-

ing chaste women in the cult of the goddess of Beauty, drinking oxen's urine and the ablution of the face therewith (the two latter are ceremonies called Bareshnum, held by the Zoroastrians); burying girls alive, burning the living with the dead, considering fire as sacred and forbidding the arts and crafts connected with it; avoiding strangers, prohibiting the touching of others with wet hands, forbidding to eat with others, even though they were of the same race, country and religion (Hindus), and many similar practices which we refrain from mentioning here.

Moreover, philosophers and doctors have been, in those days, defenders of such beliefs and shameful practices; eager, even at the risk of their lives, to preserve them from any change, transformation, removal or abolishment.

Consider (may God the Exalted illumine your sight and insight!) the Arabian people and the difference in their condition before and after the appearance of Islam. By this comparison you may perchance become cognizant of that which we have alluded to, concerning the clear difference between Divine Knowledge and philosophical sciences, in connection with quickening humanity and removing spiritual sicknesses. The Greek and Egyptian philosophers, near neighbors of the Arabs, notwithstanding their abundant learning, vast enlightenment, the copious means and instruments at their disposal and the assistance rendered by governments in their behalf, were unable to spread civilization among the Arabs, who were

all adherents of the same Sabeian religion and followers of the same form of idolatry. Certainly this was easier of accomplishment than the recovery from Spiritual sicknesses and the removal of religious ailments. But the rise of a single illiterate man removed from their necks the fetters of ignorance, untied the shackles of bondage from their feet, awakened them from the unconsciousness of sleep and breathed into them a new Spirit of Life. They were invigorated, developed, illuminated and enlightened, until they transmitted the lights of Knowledge and civilization, and spread the virtues of refinement and humanity, not only in Arabian lands but also throughout the extensive countries of the East, abolishing those ruinous beliefs and habits among the Zoroastrians and Pagans.

O ye honorable men! After ye understand this clear point and evident fact, ye could equally comprehend that, verily, God the Exalted has assigned the institution of His Religion and the promotion of His Word to the illiterate, and not to philosophers or scholars. This He has done in order that it may be more effective in removing all doubts, that it may be beyond the reach of accusation, and to demonstrate the fact that this Sacred Power has no connection with the studied sciences, nor origin from any acquired learning.

George Sale, of England, the erudite writer of the life of Mohammed and Islam, has neglected this point and ignored this fact, as is evident from the 33d page of his "Preliminary Discourse," pre-

ceding his translation of the Koran:—"(Mohammed's) followers instead of being ashamed of their Master's ignorance, glory in it, as an evident proof of his divine mission, and scruple not to call him, as he is indeed called in the Koran itself, 'an illiterate prophet.'"

This learned man has imagined that the illiteracy of any of the prophets should be an object of shame and dishonor to his followers, whereas it is recorded in St. John's Gospel, ch vii., that Christ (Glory be to Him!) was also illiterate:—(v. 15.) "And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" (v. 16.) "Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." This statement clearly shows that His learning was spiritual and inspired, therefore, not acquired and studied.

How can this erudite historian excuse himself upon this point, admitting, as he must, that Christ (Glory be to Him!) left the Keys of Heaven in the hands of an illiterate fisherman, and inspired the heart of a common Jewish tax-gatherer with the spirit of Apostleship and Guidance? Is not this a declaration of the Power of God the Exalted, proving to all the people that He discomfits the armies of tyrants and subdues the swords of Pharaohs through a shepherd's rod? Is it not clear that He makes of the fisher a fisher of men and the overturner of the emperors' thrones; that He ordains an illiterate one, through His Supreme Kingdom, to instruct Persian philosophers and the sons of

kings? Is not this a proof of God's Grandeur; making these ignorant ones the evidence of His Manifestation and of His Will and Desire? Is not their separation from acquired learning and sciences a clearer proof of the Divine Omnipotence? Is it not the most explicit argument of immanent heavenly power: the best means for suppressing the superstitions of the followers of fancy and refuting the doubt of the suspicious ones?

It is evident from the statements already made that all the power and energy which proceeded from the Apostle Paul, in promulgating the Divine Word throughout the Pagan world, during the early growth of Christianity, was imparted to and made manifest in him by the Word of our Lord Christ. His power came not from acquired sciences or from the amplitude of his scholastic learning, as is maintained by most of the Christian people. The proof of this is that before his belief in Christ, his knowledge and learning were the same as the endowments of the other Jewish doctors, such as in reading, writing, and recognition of the ordinances of the Hebraic laws. Paul was not accounted as a philosopher of that age, nor is he said to have been educated in any of the Athenian or Egyptian schools. We have no book written by him upon philosophy, natural science, astronomy, arithmetic, geometry, medicine or any other branch of intelligence and learning. Moreover, he himself has repudiated the acquired philosophy and Greek learning in several passages of

his epistles; as is recorded in the Epistle to the Colossians, ch. ii., v. 8, thus:—"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

He has likewise recorded in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, ch. i., vs. 22, 23:—"For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." The Jews were constantly demanding signs and miracles from the disciples of our Lord Christ, while the Greeks were asking from them sciences and wisdom, thus testing them through learning and philosophy. But that upright saint and eloquent orator (St. Paul) silenced and resisted them through the power of Christ's Kingdom; the lights of which Kingdom had risen, and its power appeared in the illiterate disciples, those persecuted companions and penniless friends of Christ. This may be the greatest proof of the Power of God. It is written:—"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." (I. Cor., ch. i., v. 27.)

Consequently, it is clearly proven that the disciples of Christ (Glory be to Him!) promoted His Word and confirmed His religion through the Divine Power which they had gained from Him, and not through the learning and sciences with which their enemies abounded, but of which they

themselves had none; as is evident to those who study their lives and history.

If it be said that this Power, which founds a new law and a new Religion, has been assisted by any worldly kingdom or dominion, or by any financial wealth or riches, it is also evident that these were not possessed by the prophets and founders of laws and religions. This plain fact does not need any further argument, demonstration or prolix discussion to hearts free from fanaticism. How could the power and wealth of Moses (Peace be upon Him!) and the Israelites be compared with the wealth and influence of the Pharaohs? Could the riches of the companions of our Lord Christ be compared with the wealth and pomp of the emperors, or could the dominion of any prophet be compared with the power of contemporary hostile kings and tyrants? It has been charged against Islam that it was promulgated and spread by the swords of the Arab generals, just as the Persians, Jews, Buddhists and Hindoos say that Christianity was spread through the military power of emperors, and strengthened and established by the sword of tyrant kings. But all this is a foolish surmise and a fictitious statement. The truth is that the Word of Islam was spread among the Arabs even before the flight of Mohammed, just as Christianity penetrated and was promulgated before the conversion of Constantine the Great and the assistance of the Cæsars. Moreover, all those armies, defenders and swords were founded, established and organized through the effect of

the Word of God and the immense influence of the Will of God. Were it not for the Divine Books, these armies would have stood to assist infidelity and these destructive swords would have been drawn to promote idolatry, and not to further and spread the Unity. This is evident to such as are endowed with a brilliant insight and innate understanding. But God the Exalted, on account of His boundless Mercy, abundant Grace, the appearance of His Power and the shining forth of His Argument, has desired to entirely remove such charge and doubt against this latter-day Glorious Manifestation and Most Splendid and Exalted Dawn. Therefore, He has strictly and absolutely prohibited not only conflict and warfare, but even that which might be aggravating to souls and creative of hostility within hearts, such as reviling, execration, vainglory and pride; so that the Power of the Divine Word may become manifest, and that all doubts and suspicions may be allayed during coming centuries and generations.

O ye believers! Now that you have understood the reality of the "Proof of Stability" and the meaning of the "Logical Argument," know (may God illumine your cheerful faces with the Beha of His Luminous Countenance!) that the nations have neglected this evident proof and denied this manifest highway because of two things in which they have been instructed by their doctors and leaders since their childhood. These two ideas have become to them as real facts, and so well-rooted in their hearts as to be considered religious necessities.

The first thing is each nation's denial of the other's religion. The Jews deny the truth of Buddhism, the Buddhists that of the Jews; the Mussulmans deny the truth of Brahmanism, the Brahmanists that of Islam; the Christians that of the Zoroastrians, and the latter that of Christianity.

The second thing is their denial of the appearance of new Manifestations and new Religions. The Jews denied the truth of the appearance of our Lord Christ (Glory be to Him!); the Christians denied the appearance of Mohammed; and the Mussulmans denied that of the Manifestation of our Lord Beha-Ullah (Glorified is His Grandeur!). The Jews considered Christianity as indisputably false; their hearts hated it and their souls were offended with it. Likewise is the falsehood of Islam to the Christians, and the falsehood of Buddhism, Brahmanism, and Sabeanism to the Jews, Christians, and Mussulmans. Moreover, their disgust and offence were increased because of the shameful calumnies and the abominable beliefs and deeds which their respective religious doctors attributed to each other. These slanders became well-rooted in their minds in bygone days, owing to the want of communication between different nations. The lack of information of the one concerning the real doctrine of the other resulted generally from their religious books not being translated, and from the difficulty in spreading scientific writings. This condition was aggravated by the fact that the art

of printing had not as yet been invented, and because of the weakness of some nations and their fear of divulging their beliefs to their enemies. Therefore, slanders and calumnies spread far and wide, the circle of scandal increased, and lies and false accusations became universal among nations. In this way the Jewish doctors have slandered our Lord Christ, and such calumnies have prevented the Jews from believing in Him for over 1800 years.

The Jews suffered great calamities, unbearable afflictions and painful disasters during long centuries; endured bitter hardships, violent misfortunes, and all kinds of sorrows and woes, rather than acknowledge His truth, believe in His Word, or ponder even one hour over the proofs and arguments of His Revelation. So, also, other religions, faiths, creeds and sects, did not refrain from fabricating every disgraceful calumny against whoever might contradict their religion, laws, creed and doctrine. It is evident what a great effect this had in the hearts of their followers and adherents.

A potent influence against unity of belief was the introduction of heretical and debased rites and ceremonies into the old religions,—from which none are free. For instance, we see idol and image worship introduced into Buddhism and Brahmanism; fire worship into Zoroastrianism; the celebration of the anniversary of saints' birthdays, devouring serpents, and dancing into the Sunnite sects; the dramatic representation of the life of

Imams and martyrs, and wounding their heads with daggers, into the Shi'ah sects. All this caused the people to doubt and give credit to these detractions and accusations, for they considered these debased rites as proofs and evidences of the falsehood of other religions.

For instance, if it be said to a Christian or Musulman that Buddhism was originally inspired by God, and that its founder was sent from God, he would be astonished, bewildered, offended and filled with hatred at the claim and statement. He would say:—"How could idolatry be a Divine Truth and how could the founder of such a religion be considered a true prophet?" At the same time, he would fail to understand the fact that the worship of idols and images was not a fundamental truth of Buddhism, Brahmanism or even Sabeanism. He would see that these false ceremonies were introduced into those religions just as the worship of the pictures of the saints, adoration of the relics of martyrs, and many other similar practices were introduced into Christianity; although not one of these ideas are revealed or alluded to in the Holy Gospels.

From what we have already mentioned in detail, two evident conditions are produced in all religions, which gave rise to two clear results.

THE FIRST RESULT—is the inability of people to prove the truth of their religion and the reality of their prophet by clear argument and evident demonstration, whereby their respective religions and prophets might be distinguished, each from the other.

If the followers of any religion cling to the miracles which they attribute to their prophet, and which are recorded in their books, they will find the same is the case with other religions. The Jews have collected the miracles of Moses (Peace be upon Him!) in their historical works; the Christians have written of the miracles of Christ (Glory be to Him!); the Mussulmans have set forth the miracles of Mohammed in their compilations; likewise the Buddhists, Brahamans, and Zoroastrians relate the miracles of their prophets in their books.

In the "Debistan," a work containing historical records of religions and creeds, we find stories and traditions concerning the Brahaman and Zoroastrian miracles, the like of which scarcely exist in other religions and sects.

Yet, miracles and wonders are not a fundamental testimony of the truth of the Manifestations of the Command of God; nay, rather, their testimony is of a secondary and auxiliary nature. They are simply confirmatory and non-essential proofs,—which fact will be explained in its proper place, if it please God.

If the adherents of any religion maintain that they possess a book which they believe to be Divine, they will find the same statement and claim in other religions. Thus, the Jews believe in the Bible, the Christians in the Gospels, the Moslems in the Koran,—each regarding them as Heavenly Books and inspired writings. Likewise, the Hindus have held to the Vedas, the Zoroastrians to

the Zend-Avesta, and the Confucians to the book of Confucius.

If they adhere to their precepts, ordinances, regulations and laws which appertain to spiritual devotions and development of man, they will find them equally existing in other religions and creeds. "Thou canst not find any difference in the creation of the Merciful One."

If they hold to the prophecies in earlier books and ancient records,—as the Moslems hold to the texts of the Gospels when proving the truth of Mohammed, and as the Christians rest upon the utterances of the Israelitish prophets in demonstrating the truth of our Lord Christ,—it would then be necessary to prove the validity of the givers of the prophecies; inasmuch as an earnest seeker would not be satisfied without being led to a valid conclusion.

This will finally necessitate the acknowledgment of the Divine and Great Power, the heavenly and dominant Energy; the ultimate arrival at an inevitable conclusion, which we have termed the "Logical Proof" and decisive Argument. But the leaders of religions, as we have already stated, do not wish to admit this manifest proof or to walk in this clear highway. This would prevent their denial of the Manifestations of God, and entirely counteract their rejection of the Day-Springs of the Command of God. As this Divine Power is given to each one of the Dawning-places of the Lights of God, these religious leaders, should they acknowledge it, would be compelled necessarily to ac-

knowledge all of them. As they are not able to prove the truth of their religion, and do not know how to demonstrate the validity of their prophet, they adhere to every falsehood and cling to every abomination, satisfying their followers with fictitious ideas, and deluding them with confused dreams. Should they adhere to the above-mentioned clear truth and manifest argument, they would avoid the need of such deplorable action.

THE SECOND RESULT—is the appearance of great numbers who repudiate all the religions, and so encourage the spread of blasphemous beliefs, such as denying the prophets and contradicting Divine laws, notwithstanding their acknowledgment of the existence of God. This is the case with most of the material philosophers and belated wanderers in the deserts of natural phenomena. Such philosophers deny all the prophets and messengers and believe that the instituting of laws and religions is the product of human intellect, instead of being the outcome of the Divine, Invisible Will. They, however, believe in the existence of a god which is not beyond the limit of imagination. This has already been described under the subject of “Divine Unity,” and demonstrated in explaining the meaning of Oneness.

Among them, some have gone so far as to deny even the existence of the Essence of God the Exalted, persevering in this opinion and contradicting everything supernatural. Some others have persisted so far in these false ideas and superstitions that they have been driven into the wilder-

ness of obscure beliefs, have become heedless of the victorious Power of God, deluded by the deceitful flashing sophistries of human learning, imagining their own weak souls capable of instituting laws, and their fickle and inefficient minds as able to found religions. They have arisen and put forward false claims, assuming great and lofty positions, such as prophethood or Divinity itself, and instituting religious systems. This is demonstrated in history and evidenced by the present conditions.

Moreover, the evil deeds of the spiritual chiefs and doctors of laws, such as the Mussulman divines, Christian bishops, Jewish priests, and other religious leaders among the Zoroastrians, Buddhists and Hindus, have greatly aided them in their pride and encouraged them in maintaining such evils as denying the Divine Essence, contradicting heavenly laws, or putting forward false and daring claims. The ignorance of these leaders as to the religious facts, their shameful deeds and evil management in educating the people, and their adherence to religious tricks and intrigues in satisfying men with fictitious beliefs, have led numbers of people to doubt the origin of Divine Religion, and have rendered them apt to incline toward the beliefs of natural philosophers. Great congregations and parties have been multiplied and propagated, notably during the last century, who deny the prophets, scoff at all religions, ridicule every spiritual calling and reject all the devotional acts and religious ceremonies. Their evil end, great

dismay and misfortune, are known to men of discernment, as is clearly spoken by Peter the Apostle in His prophecies and epistles.

From what we have already explained and set forth, it is evident that all these corruptions and evils have resulted from the denial and ignorance of such people concerning the Heavenly and Great Power which God has made to be an evident characteristic of His Prophets, a manifest sign of His Chosen Ones, a clear standing light for His Road and Pathway and an accurate standard for recognizing the proof and argument of His Truth. How often has God proven the weakness of human strength and the feebleness and impotence of the material and phenomenal against this heavenly Power? The people of the world have long resisted it, but were finally dismayed; nations both of the East and West have wrestled with it, but were overthrown. This Power was opposed, in the appearance of Moses, by the Pharaohs; in the Manifestation of Christ, by the Jews and emperors; and in the rise of Mohammed, by the Persian kings and Arabs. It has also been opposed by false prophets, who have attempted to found a religion without the permission of God; falsely and presumptuously laying claim to prophethood, as is testified and recorded in history. The histories of *Mazdak, in the days

*The story of Mazdak, in the days of King Kobad, the father of the Great Anoshirwan, is given in the history of "Shah-Nameh" of Ferdowsy, and also in all the Persian histories.

of King Kobad; of the Jew, ¹Sád Dawlah; of ²Argoon-Khan, the Mongol, in Persia; ³Ala'adin El Khalede, in India; and the French Philosophers during the Revolution of 1792, are all warnings and admonitions to the prudent and to the people of the Book. These philosophers, wise men, kings and statesmen attempted, through their great ingenuity and the abundance of their science and learning, to institute a religion of simpler laws, regulations, doctrines and principles within the range of average capacities and minds, suitable to all tastes and conformable to the time and circumstances. Conditions proved favorable to their desires, and the civil and military leaders submitted to their opinions and plans. But God frustrated their ideas, disappointed their hopes, dispersed their congregations, and showed the folly of their imaginations, until their histories remain as warnings to the men of honor and as admonitions to the people of discernment and perception.

For what reason have the doctors of Darwinism taken the resemblance of some human bones to those of ourang-outangs as a decisive proof of the fact that mankind has descended from the apes? Why have they considered this evidence, notwith-

¹Sád Dawlah, the Jew, was the Vizier of Argoon-Khan, the Mongol, in Persia.

²Argoon-Khan was the son of Abaka-Khan, the son of Hulakoo-Khan, the son of Tuluy, the son of Genghiz-Khan, the Mongol.

Argoon-Khan reigned in Persia from 683 to 690 A. H. (1291 A. D.). His life is recorded in the history written by Wassaf, the contemporary and historian of this Dynasty.

³Ala'adin El Khalede was the King of India at Delhi, in 698 A. H. He was a great King of India during the latter part of the 13th Century, and belonged to the Dynasty of Khalede. Full particulars concerning his attempt to found a new religion are given in the history of Farishté, one of the greatest historical works of India.

standing its shallowness and invalidity, as being a final certificate that man has gained his growth, existence and heredity from the race of ourang-outangs? They have regarded apes as their ancestors, but have not considered the Power which alone has conquered the world and subdued nations as being a proof of the fact that the Manifesters and Dawning-places of this Power have been Divine men and heavenly personages. Could the habit of smoking, evidenced by a single ourang-outang, and its likeness in body to the form of some of the African savages, prove its homogeneity with mankind? The apes differ widely from savages in numerous things, such as intelligence, the comprehension of general subjects, the capacity of attaining perfection, etc. Shall all this be esteemed and admitted as proof, while the subjugation of Pharaohs, domination of kings and tyrants by the rise of a single individual, without assistance or encouragement by any ruler, authority or learning, is not considered evidence that such a man is assisted by an Invisible, Divine Power?

Indeed, this is a strange philosophy,—an amazing wisdom and discernment! How true is the warning of the great Apostle Paul:—"Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit."

From what we have described and explained, it follows that the "Logical Proof" is the greatest and clearest argument as to the truth of the Manifestations of the Command of God. It also follows that the stability of the Word and the

continuance of a religion is the strongest proof and firmest evidence as to the truth of a mission and the founder of a Faith. For should we disregard this clear proof and evident argument, as is the case with every denier and opposer, the philosophical-minded among people would be compelled to accept unknown imaginations and absurd and unintelligible theories, such as the chain and concatenation of causes, or the absence of cause and origin, as previously explained. The religious-minded among them would then be necessarily unable to prove the truth of their religion and the validity of their faith.

This proof is named the proof of continuance or stability, because the continuance of a religion and the stability of the Word is an establishment of its truth, made by God, and is a testimony of its reality. It is absurd to think God incapable of annulling falsehood and crushing the unreal. He has not forgotten His promises to suppress false claimants and destroy seducers. This is confirmed in books and writings, and preserved in the prophecies uttered by saints and prophets.

THIRD PROOF—THE WORKING OF WONDERS AND MIRACLES:—By these are meant deeds which are beyond the normal power of mankind to perform; wonders which proceed from the Manifestations of the Cause of God, as a favor or performed in accordance with the demands of people. Among these are causing stones to speak, trees to move, quickening the dead, changing a rod into a serpent,

and numerous other miracles which are said to have been performed by the prophets and saints. The ancient peoples regarded such events as *Ayat* (Signs). The word *Ayèh* (Sign) means literally a token, and is derived from the Semitic language, out of which the Arabic, Hebrew, Syriac, Babylonian, and some of the African languages have originated.

Whenever a messenger of God announced his mission, he would be asked to reveal the sign of his prophethood, that is, the token of the truth of his statement and the genuineness of his claim. We find it recorded by St. Matt., ch. xii., vs. 38 to 40:—"Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Likewise, in (ch. xvi., vs. 1 to 5) the same Gospel:—"The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after

a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed."

The interpretation of these verses is, that a number of the Jewish doctors temptingly asked our Lord Jesus Christ (Glory be to Him!) to show them a heavenly miracle and a Divine wonder, as a sign of His Truth and a token of His Christhood; so that they might believe in Him and confess His Religion. He answered, that they, by their sagacity, had reached such a degree of intelligence that they could foretell fair weather and rain from the aspect of the sky; that the husbandmen and villagers, when they saw the sky red at sundown, would take it as a sign of fair weather, while a "lowering red" at sunrise presaged rain.

He silenced them by saying, that they who could discern the face of the sky and distinguish the times of the change of weather should be able to know the signs of the time of the coming of prophets, and of the renewal of laws and religions; inasmuch as they posed as doctors of religion, and were considered the heirs and guardians of the knowledge of prophets and messengers. Christ meant that the divergence of beliefs and sects, the variety of thoughts and opinions, the indifference of people toward Divine ordinances and regulations, and their indulgence in low desires and bodily luxuries,—all of which are described by prophets as the "rending of the heavens," the "shaking of the pillars of the firmament,"—are the strongest proofs of the approach of the Manifestation

of God, and the clearest signs of the coming of the time of the renewal of the religion of God. Thus He said:—"A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." By this Christ has repeated the application of the term "Sign" to miracle and wonder, and has confirmed the truth that seeking after miracles and temptingly demanding signs from the Manifestations of the Command of God is a characteristic of the wicked and adulterous, the reason of which will be explained later on.

In the Koran, also, the word "Sign" is applied to miracle or wonder, as is clearly shown in the verse speaking of the deniers:—"Let him (Mohammed) come unto us therefore with some sign, in like manner as the former prophets were sent." Also (ch. T. H.):—"The unbelievers say, Unless he come unto us with a Sign from his Lord, (we will not believe on him). Hath not a plain declaration come unto them, of that which (is contained) in the former volumes" (of Scripture), (by the revelation of the Koran)?

That is to say, the deniers of his prophethood argued:—"If Mohammed is a prophet sent by God, why then does he not show unto us a Divine miracle and a heavenly wonder, as a proof of the truth of his mission and word?" Then Mohammed answered:—"Have I not brought you the Koran, which is a clear explanation of the Bible, the Gospels, and the writings of the Israelitish prophets?"

As we have demonstrated in the course of the first argument, the Book of God is the first sign which indicates the truth of a prophetic word. It is the greatest argument of a Divine mission, especially when this great sign and glorious miracle fortifies itself by explaining that which has been symbolically uttered in the old Divine volumes and closed and sealed up in the former heavenly Scriptures, such as prophecies of future events, mysteries of Resurrection and the renewal of Creation, determination of their appointed times, the record of their evidences and conditions, and even the announcement of the Dawning-Place from which these signs and mysteries will appear. Inasmuch as philosophers and wise men were not able to apprehend these points, solve these allegories or break their seals before their realization and occurrence, how could this be done by one who had never studied in a college nor read in any school? Whence the power and wisdom of one who had never been occupied in teaching or learning, nor considered a student? Is not this the clearest evidence that the Book was a heavenly sign, a spiritual gift, and the greatest proof and argument that the words and passages it contained had proceeded from the Holy Reality and descended from the pure Divine Essence?

During the middle ages of Islam the Mohammedan doctors applied the word "miracle" to wonders which human beings are unable to perform, and termed them supernatural. They divided supernatural things into many kinds; for instance,

when these wonders proceeded from a man and coincided with his claim of prophethood, they called them Mo'jaza (miracles). When performed by a prophet before he claimed his mission, they were designated Ir-hass (miracles previous to the mission). When these supernatural actions appeared from saints and holy ones, they were named Keramat (liberality); but when such appeared from misleaders and impious ones, they were called Seh'r (sorcery). These words and terms were circulated in the language of writers and doctors, until finally, becoming literary words and secondary facts, they were introduced into dictionaries. But all of these terms, except the word "miracle," which has a clear relation with the intended meaning, are weak terminologies and deficient deductions. They have proceeded from ignorance of scientific facts and theoretical analogies, as is known to such as have sound discernment in etymological points; especially the meanings of the words Keramat (liberality) and Khareki-Adat.*

Liberality is the antonym of avarice, and thus it can be applied to the generosity and liberality shown forth by the saints of God; for this is the personal honor which they have gained through their nearness to the Divine Threshold, and has no relation to superstitions and inventions.

As to the term Khareki-Adat: this signifies the changing of the natural habits and customs of

*This literally means "things which rend or change the habits of men"; but the Oriental doctors have misused this term and taken it to mean "supernatural."

men by a prophet; such as the changing of the natural customs of the Hebrews in the rites of their religion and ceremonies of their laws. As one of the signs of the coming of the Manifestations of God is the changing of the rites and ordinances of the former religion and laws,—as those of the Jews were changed with the advent of Christ (Glory be to Him!), and those of the Sabeans and Parsees by Mohammed,—therefore, men of discernment have considered these changes as being one of the greatest signs and clearest proofs of the power of the Word of God and the appearance of the Prophets of God. See ch. vii., v. 12, of the Epistle to the Hebrews:—"For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." That is, when the prophethood is renewed, there will be of necessity a renewal of laws and a change of ordinances.

This is the real and reasonable meaning of the word Khareki-Adat, instead of that which is imagined by the people of superstition and false ideas. That which is not customary to people cannot be regarded as natural and customary, in order to justify the application of the term "changing the custom" (Khareki-Adat) to the performance of the opposite. It cannot be assumed that "not raising the dead" has been a natural habit of people, to show that "quickening of the dead" might be regarded as supernatural. Nor can it be said that "not dividing the sea," "not drying the river," or "not cleaving the moon" have been natural habits of people, so that the performance of such

actions could be termed "supernatural." But observing the Sabbath day has been one of the natural habits of the Jews which was rent by our Lord Jesus Christ, and changed into the observance of Sunday. Divorce, sacrifice, polygamy, and similar other rites, were also rent, changed and reformed by Christ. Likewise, burying female children alive, showing homage to images, praying before idols, fire-worshipping, and other similar practices were confirmed habits of the Arabs and Persians,—all of which habits were destroyed by Mohammed, and changed into Mohammedan laws. These are the supernatural things which the prudent consider as the deeds of the prophets and the characteristics of the heavenly messengers, and not what has been invented by the imaginations of the superstitious or forged by the thoughts of the ignorant.

As to Seh'r (sorcery); its meaning, in ordinary acceptance, is but a remnant of the imaginations of former dark ages, the dense obscurity of which was dispersed by the lights of the dawn of the Sun of Truth, and its clouds cleared away by the blowing of the Breezes of Knowledge and Wisdom. The word "sorcery" spoken of in the holy books, means Batil (falsehood); inasmuch as the antagonists of the prophets held to false things, and considered the deeds of the prophets to be the same. Therefore the words "sorcery" and "sorcerers" were applied to falsehood and the adherents of vanities, in the words of the Elect. But with the lapse of time and centuries they became

wrapped up in the webs of superstition, and thus their real meanings became concealed, as is the case with all the words revealed in the writings of the Elect. This is a sufficient explanation to those who are endowed with perception and insight.

O ye people of Beha! Now that you understand the meanings of such words, know you (may God illumine your insight, increase the purity of your conscience, enlighten your hearts and minds through His Manifest Light!) that the proofs and arguments must needs be in connection with the subject which is to be proven and demonstrated; otherwise they cannot be accounted as proofs, even though they might be very wonderful and astonishing. For instance, if a certain person claims to be a physician and seeks to prove the validity of his claim by flying in the air, the truth of his claim would not, of necessity, be proven, even if he did so. Flight in the air is not a characteristic endowment of a physician, and there is no connection between the medical profession and flight, even though soaring in the air is extremely amazing. But healing sicknesses, removing diseases, physical diagnosis and treatment are characteristics of medical science and confirmatory evidences of the truth of a physician's claim. Again, if a man claims to be an engineer, his proof cannot be in quickening the dead. If he claims to be a writer, his evidence is not in the fact that he causes stones to speak; or if he claims to be an orator, his proof is not in cleaving the sea asunder, etc. Such performances cannot prove their respective state-

ments, validate their claims, nor be considered as proofs and arguments. There is no connection whatever between these practices and claims; as is clearly and decisively evident to such as reflect upon the meaning of proof and argument.

It is said by the erudite Professor Cornelius Vandyk, of America, in the 8th part of his book, written in Arabic and entitled, "Naksh-Fil-Hajar" ("Engraving on Stone"), on "Logic":—"Man being subject to mistake as to logical matters, it is good for him to avail himself of applied logic, which may preserve him from mistake and direct him to the real fact. So that he may not consider as a cause, things which are not causes, nor as conclusions things which are not conclusions; and may not build on a corrupt foundation, nor regard as arguments, things which are not arguments. It is said by Imam-el-Gazali,—'If a man say that the number four is more than ten, and that he demonstrates this by transforming a rod into a serpent, even though I be astonished at the trick of the performer, yet I will firmly stand by the fact that four is less than ten, etc.' This evinces that in such a case, there would not be any relation between the argument and the matter which is to be proven; therefore it cannot be considered as an argument."

Since we understand this introduction, we now can easily apprehend that there is neither connection nor relationship between having the faculty of producing miracles and wonders and the claim of prophethood. Verily, prophethood is no other

than the mission of a man on the part of God the Exalted for the guidance of people, and this fact has no connection whatever with cleaving seas asunder, bringing water out of rocks, causing stones and trees to speak, etc. These actions have no connection with the meaning of prophethood, which signifies mediatorship between the creatures and their Creator, delivery of His ordinances and messages, instructing them in His laws and devotional acts. The prophet's mission is reformation of moral principles, development of spiritual graces, and beautifying characters. Verily, demanding miracles from the prophets and temptingly seeking signs from the Manifestations of the Command of God, is like asking governors and rulers to show forth deeds which are becoming to kings and absolute sovereigns, in order to prove the truth of their claims as rulers; so that the subjects may deem it their duty to obey them. In fact, their dignity can only be demonstrated by the firmans of their kings, and corroborated by the charters of their governments. For example, a man may claim to be the ruler of Egypt on the part of the Sultan. A party of the inhabitants of the country deny him, and demand of him an evidence of the truth of his authority. Naturally he proves his position by the charter of his Sultan and the firman of his Government. Should they repudiate his firman, deny his charter and demand that he show forth some of the actions pertaining to the characteristics of the kings and sovereigns, such as fitting out armies, conquering

countries, destroying fortresses, slaying and capturing men, dismissing ministers and appointing chiefs,—he certainly will not fulfill their demand, nor grant their wishes, but will depend upon his firman and prove his authority through the charter of his King, even though he may possess the power to perform the demands made upon him. There are certain reasons and times for executions, imprisonments, appointments, discharges, equipment of armies, and the conquest of countries. Rulers do not perform these things except when expedient for the circumstances and demanded by the law. To this particular point the following verse revealed in the Heavenly Books refers:—"And no apostle doth bring a sign, unless by the permission of God." This proves that the mission of prophets and the sending of spiritual messengers is similar to the appointment of rulers and the sending of governors in the phenomenal world, as is evident to the men of perception and to such as are endowed with sight.

Since we now understand the lack of connection between the claim of prophethood and the power of doing things habitually impossible, and realize the contrast between them, we can comprehend the meaning of that which has been formerly mentioned, viz.,—that miracles and wonders are auxiliary and confirmatory evidences and not essential and principal arguments. We see also that they are as secondary supports to the truth of the manifestations of the Command of God, and not primary indications. This is the reason why the

prophets refused to produce such signs, rely upon them, and adduce them as proofs, as is outlined from the verses recorded in St. Matt., ch. xii., v. 39, and ch. xvi., v. 4:—"A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas."

Verily the Prophets, on account of their evident proofs, their great powers, the effectiveness of their words, and the prevalence of their ordinances, are in no need of producing proofs which show no indication of the truth of their claim and the validity of their mission. This of itself is a clear and principal indication,—a manifest and evident proof.

Moreover, temptingly demanding signs and miracles from the Manifestations of God is identical with tempting the Lord Himself, which act is prohibited by God the Exalted, in the Holy Bible. He has warned us expressly against this:—"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." As formerly explained and proved, tempting the Essence of God the Exalted is no other than tempting Its Manifestations and Dawning-places; and testing the prophets by seeking signs and miracles from them, is the meaning of "tempting the Lord." This is identical with pride evinced towards God, contradicting the Desire of God, antagonizing His Will, and thwarting His Wisdom; all of which lead to ruin and desolation, and entail destruction and perdition. It is also revealed in the Heavenly Books:—"And we send not signs but for intimidation."

Thus Jesus Christ (Glory be to Him!) silenced the Jewish tempter, who had set Him upon a pinnacle of the Temple of Solomon, and tempted Him to cast Himself down from that lofty edifice, by saying to Him:—"If thou be the Son of God . . . He shall give his angels charge concerning thee as it is written." Christ answered him:—"It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." This signifies that testing Christ was identical with testing and tempting God, an act strictly prohibited in the Book of God. This answer, notwithstanding its brevity and conciseness, is full of grace and strength, for besides being an argument forbidding the demanding of miracles from the Manifestations of the Command of God, it also silenced by showing that in citing the texts of the Book against Christ the tempter had himself contradicted its commandments and ordinances.

It is characteristic of the enemies of God to hold to the literal form of the words of the Books of God, in denying the Manifestations of His Command and Behest, while they neglect those texts which clearly indicate the truth of their Manifestation, prove the reality of their Dawn, confirm their word, and eloquently pronounce the validity of their claim. Thus they fulfill this verse revealed in the Book:—"Do you therefore believe in part of the Book and reject other part thereof? But whoso among you doth this, shall have no other reward than shame in this life, and on the day of Resurrection they shall be sent to a most grievous punishment."

The prophets' refusal to work miracles is not because of their being absurd and impracticable, or that they are impossible, as is imagined by some so-called philosophers; for possibility and impossibility are not of the essential qualities of things; nay, rather, they are relative and comparative. There are many facts which are accounted as possible for a certain species, while the same are impracticable for another. The actions which are peculiar to mankind are possible to man, yet impossible to other species of animals, supernatural to them and beyond their power. Likewise the acts natural to animals are possible for them and impracticable to the vegetable. Therefore miracles seem impossible to mankind, yet are possible to the Manifestations of the Command of God, because of the perfection of the Holy Spirit manifest within them, and the comprehensiveness of the Sacred Power which has descended upon them. In truth, a Man in whom the Supreme Power is manifest and from whom Divine Attributes proceed; who has singly subdued the world and dominated nations; who has prophesied future events in a particular as well as general sense, all of which prophecies are fulfilled and have come to pass, even after the lapse of ages and centuries;—nothing is beyond the capacity of a Man who has done all these things through His perfect Spirit, pervading Power, lofty essence and vast strength, nor is He neglectful of any matter. Refusal to show wonders and signs demanded is not on account of their inability to perform them, or be-

cause they are impracticable; but it is because of the fact that miracles and wonders are not things which can prove the truth of their mission and the validity of their claim. Nor are they a complete and primary indication which could satisfy a diligent seeker and earnest investigator, as has been already described in detail. For it is clear to an intelligent enquirer that, should he confine himself to wonders and miracles in attempting to prove the truth of the prophets, it would end in a collision of proofs and a conflict between arguments. Because such wonders and miracles are not permanent and everlasting proofs, as are the verses of the Book. To these proofs every one may have access and recourse; may be directed to the conclusion, and may demonstrate the cause by the effect. Moreover, these wonders will necessarily be handed down to others through traditions and records, especially throughout future centuries and generations. If every nation gave credit to that which was handed down to it concerning its prophet, the founder of its faith, its religious leaders and saints, and the sepulchres of its holy men,—there would be, in such case, a collision of proofs and a conflict of arguments. Thus the right path would be concealed, the finger-posts of guidance destroyed, the highway of religion darkened, and the lights of truth and assurance disappear. Are not the Roman Catholics resting upon the wonders and miracles which they narrate of their former bishops and monks? Does not the Greek Church rest upon those related of

their monks and bishops; the Sunnites upon the wonderful acts and supernatural deeds attributed to their doctors and holy ones; and the Shi'ah upon those narrated of their Imams and leaders? Such is the case with other religions and creeds.

O thou excellent reader! Strip thyself from thine old garment of imitation, abstain from religious fanaticism and racial egotism; ascend through the power of perception to the summit of investigation, and place the adherents of all the religions, peoples, creeds and sects, before thy view. Then look with the gaze of a discerning man from that lofty and exalted station. Thou wilt see different peoples, various and contradictory nations, each renouncing the other; while each possesses books filled with wonders and miracles attributed to its own prophets and saints. These books contain the adulation of their chosen ones, and the wondrous conditions and lives of their leaders; a mass of reading which could not be completed in cycles; and numerous lives would pass away before they could be finished. So look upon them, consider them, and answer by thy truth: if all these contradictory miracles and various wonders be considered as a reliable proof and argument which could be rested upon, how then could the true among them be known from the false, the right from wrong, the guides from misleaders; and what could distinguish between guidance and error, the way of salvation and the way of perdition?

From what has been clearly explained in detail, it is manifest that miracles and wonders are not

proofs of a primary nature which could independently indicate the truth of the claimant; nay, rather, they are only secondary proofs and auxiliary demonstration as to the truth of the Manifestations of the Command of God and the Dawning-places of the Religion of God. It is impossible to deny the ability of the Manifestations of God to perform miracles, in face of what has been explained concerning the inherence of their power; to which fact their disciples and the contents of their books and writings testify. Even granting this, however, it is impossible to believe all the miracles and wonders which are related of them.

One of the correct rules held by the divines and theologians, in connection with this subject, is that miracles traditionally related of a prophet or founder of a Religion, and not contradictory to his own words, are undoubtedly true. These can be taken as a proof of his truth and a confirmatory evidence of the validity of his claim. Such are the miracles which have been witnessed by former nations, and those which have been authenticated in the Manifestation of the Cause of God during this sacred and manifest Century. But if there is any contrast or discrepancy between the alleged miracles and the Prophet's Words, then the miracles must be considered as allegorical narrations which need to be explained, so that they may harmonize with the usages of the Prophets of God and agree with the Utterances of the Manifestations of the Command of God.

But the general rule, which is regarded as authoritative by the learned and philosophers, is that if the wonders and miracles related of the Prophets are connected with the perfection of the Sacred Spirit manifested in them and with Its power and predominance, then such can be considered as real, accurate facts, and secondary auxiliary proofs. Otherwise, they will be accounted mere fabricated traditions; falsities invented by pretended love when it deviates from the true path.

What has already been mentioned is sufficient for such as have a clear perception of the Divine methods and of the natural laws after which the world is made.

THE FOURTH PROOF:—This relates to the prophecies revealed in the Heavenly Books, concerning the appearance of a subsequent manifestation, whom God will send to guide nations, found laws of religion and renew them at the appointed time. Such are the prophecies given by Moses and the Israelitish prophets concerning the Manifestation of Christ (Glory be to Him!); those given by Mohammed and the Imams of his household regarding the Appearance of the Mahdi (Precursor); and the utterances of all the Prophets and founders of religions concerning the coming of the Day of God, and the Manifestation of the Spirit for promoting the Cause of God.

There is no extant religion whose founder has not reserved a part of his book for prophecies concerning one whom God would manifest subsequent to him; one who would renew religion and

its glory. All religions, likewise, contain prophecies regarding the "Final Salvation" by the "Great Manifestation," the Mighty "Resurrection," and the "Most Great Hour," which former books have likewise unanimously announced. This proof is one of the clear arguments, manifest and reliable evidences which demonstrate the truth of our Lord the Exalted, the Supreme. It has been proved in the previous introductions that the appearance of the Manifestations of the Cause of God are really the Manifestations of the Holy and Divine Reality, Single in Essence, and that all the prophets are respectively the Manifestations of that Single Reality and One Essence. So no difference exists among them, nor is there any variance in their truths. During the past centuries and former ages God the Exalted has entered into a covenant with nations, through the tongues of His prophets and messengers, concerning His next Manifestation. This Covenant has been recorded in the prophets' books and writings, so that mankind might await the coming of the Day of His Manifestation, be prepared for the illumination of His Light, lay hold of the handle of His religion, and be enlightened with the lamp of His laws and regulations. For it is inconceivable that the people of the world could ever be without need of the Divine Manifestations; that the order of human society could be founded upon anything but religious principles, or that human-made laws could suffice for the establishment of nations. That nations are in need of laws and regulations whereby their

interests, properties, and lives may be preserved and their prosperity and permanence secured, is a clear fact, beyond need of any further explanation or production of argument. Religion is no other than a code of Divine regulations whereby society is supported and attainment to everlasting felicity is secured. To formulate such laws is far beyond the highest intellect of man, and the genius of the men of learning can never agree thereupon unless reinforced by Divine Sources. This fact is witnessed in the conditions of those former nations which had ascended the ladder of learning and civilization.

Have not the philosophers, doctors of divinity and chiefs among the great nations which ascended the summit of glory and excellence, such as the Persians, Chaldeans, Egyptians, Greeks, Turks and Indians, failed to produce such laws? Notwithstanding their abundant learning and great enlightenment, have laws been forthcoming upon which all their opinions would agree, and which would secure their happiness and permanence? The laws they have created, invariably failed to abolish savage and abominable customs, which their descendants and posterity ridicule, even in the present day.

Therefore, among these high nations, such practices have prevailed as offering children in sacrifice before idols, worshipping images, interring female children alive, violating chaste women in order to gain the favor of the goddess of Beauty, praying to fire, animals, rivers, trees; and numerous other

ruinous practices and vile deeds. These were considered by them as standard customs, the most excellent laws and modes of adoration.

But God the Exalted prevented and abolished these, through the appearance of Divine Religions, and illumined human minds by the light of the Words of the Holy Manifestations. Similar ruinous customs and fictitious beliefs are still being discovered among all the present religions and extant nations, the removal and abolition of which God the Almighty has ordained to be effected by the appearance of the Powerful Lord and the final great Salvation. This is evident to every one of discernment and perception.

All that has been said indicates that verily the appearance of Divine Religions has been the greatest gift of Heaven for the preservation of society and the most glorious Divine bestowal for the accomplishment of human virtues. The Prophet's words concerning the Appearance of the next Manifestation, prepare those endowed with sound judgment for the acceptance of it, and make ready the possessors of pure hearts for response to it after its Appearance. Therefore, prophecies concerning a Manifestation whom God would cause to appear later for the quickening of the spiritually dead and reformation of existing laws, are considered as one of the greatest proofs and arguments, and a powerful confirmatory evidence of the truth of the Manifestations of God, the Lord of the Creatures. But, understanding these prophecies and apprehending their minute

points and realities, depends upon having sound minds, pure hearts, sanctified breasts, and chaste souls. This will become evident through the clear and manifest proofs which will be explained later.

Consequently the prophecies are regarded as secondary proofs in comparison with the Divine Book and Logical Argument. They are but literal proofs. Literal proofs necessarily contain allegories and symbolism. As languages radically change in the course of centuries and generations, these prophecies can scarcely be understood without interpretation after the lapse of one thousand years. Therefore it is impossible to rely upon their meanings without decisive analogies. So, literal proofs are accounted by the philosophers and rhetoricians as oral arguments, and not decisive ones. Moreover, the Divine prophecies recorded in the Holy Scriptures, as is clearly testified by their very texts, are no other than symbolical and sealed words, and the essential purpose thereof is closed up and unknown. But the opening of these seals and the elucidation of these allegories have been apportioned to the coming of the time of the end, and to the advent of the great Hour. In face of this fact, the prophecies can only be regarded as auxiliary proofs, and not of the primary logical arguments. God willing, this subject will be considered in detail, in the course of the future introductions, and sufficient explanation will be given about it.

We will now consider some of the principal points upon which depend the understanding of

the texts of the Holy Scriptures, the solution of the symbols and allegories, the breaking of their seals and the opening of their treasures. In this we rely upon God, the Revealer of Verses, the Manifester of proofs and evidences, the dispeller of the darkness of former things from heaven and earth.

First,—Verily, the Prophets and Manifestations of God employed various metaphors in their writings, and embellished their graceful explanations by all sorts of allegories and similes. Just as they have been in spirit, the Manifestations of the Names and Attributes of God and the Dawning-places of His Identity and Essence, so also they have been in bodily form, the manifestations of humanity. Thus they were subject to all human needs, such as food, drink, sleep, speech, social intercourse, and liable to physical accidents and other conditions. Indeed they were the most perfect of mankind in regard to these qualities, and every human attribute has been manifest in them in its highest condition and greatest glory. As grace of explanation and eloquence of discourse are considered highest human accomplishments, inasmuch as they are the outcome of genius, lofty taste and brilliant minds;—so these qualities have been manifest in the Messengers and Prophets who were the most excellent of mankind and were endowed with genius and brilliant intellects. Their explanations have appeared in the form of verses, and their words were revealed in songs. They surpassed all the men of eloquence in grace

of style, and in the form of their explanations. They used symbolical points and concealed subtle meanings under the veils of allegories and allusions. Therefore the people of error have estimated these productions as fantastic trifles and mere poetry; the result of insanity and hallucination. Thus the ignorant have gone so far as to say:—"Shall we abandon our Gods for a distracted poet?" (*Koran, ch. 37). All this is lack of knowledge of the Words of God, and inability of the spiritually dense to distinguish between the Heavenly Revelation and human thoughts. God is far exalted above what the unjust assert, and holy above the imagination of the ignorant!

Second,—All that has been revealed in the Holy Books concerning the prophecies of the Day of God, Resurrection, the Manifestation of the Lord, the coming of the Hour, its signs, tokens, conditions and events, is in the form of symbols and allegories, as explained above. Such are the "darkening of the sun and moon," the "falling of stars," the "rending of the heavens," "their disappearance and changing," the "trembling of the pillars of the earth," the "renewal of the earth," the "descending of the Lord in the clouds," and similar other signs spoken of in the Books, and evident to men of perception.

These words must of necessity have reasonable meanings outside their literal sense, as is clearly stated in the Heavenly Scriptures, thus:—(Isaiah,

*This refers to the objections made by the Pagan Arabs to the writings of Mohammed.

ch. vi., vs. 9, 10)—“And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.”

God sealed the hearts of the Jews lest they understand the real meanings thereof, and shut their eyes lest they see them. For God had ordained the overthrow of their dominion and their degradation. He decreed their dispersion and suppression, because of their injustice and evil deeds, and their great sin in falsely denying our Lord Christ, whose Manifestation they anxiously awaited. For the only source of the felicity or misery of every people and the origin of its honor or degradation, is the way it understands the words of its prophets during the Manifestation of the Promised One. This One alone is the nation's resource; and its honor and continuity depend upon its belief in Him. As the Jews did not understand the real meanings of the signs given in their Book concerning the Manifestation of the Promised One, but expected their literal fulfillment, which they did not see in the Manifestation of Christ, therefore they falsely denied and rejected Him. Thus they brought about their own utter ruin, became subject to humiliation and degradation, and have been scattered in all countries and lands, even unto the present day. Had they apprehended the inner truths of these signs, they would have be-

lieved in our Lord Jesus Christ, and would have thereby ascended the zenith of grandeur and glory. This is clearly stated in the Book and is evident to men of judgment.

Likewise it is revealed in the Book of Daniel, ch. xii., v. 4:—"But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end." Also, v. 9:—"And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." These two verses clearly indicate that the purpose of the texts of the Book is not their literal, outward meaning which can be understood by every man and apprehended by every soul. Nay, rather, they have concealed meanings which would be necessarily closed up until the coming of the "end" and the Appearance of the Sun of Truth.

Third,—The aforesaid great signs of the coming of the Day of God, the tokens of the appearance of the Manifestation of the Command of God and the emblems of the Hour and Resurrection, have all been revealed from the tongues of the prophets in every one of the Heavenly Books. They appear in the same style and in the same similes and allegories, although in different languages.

Mohammed prophesied the coming of the Lord in the clouds, with His Angels, in the following words in the Koran:—

"Do they expect less than that God should come down to them overshadowed with clouds, and the Angels also? but the thing is decreed, and to God shall all things return.

"The day whereon the Spirit and the Angels shall stand in order, they shall not speak, except he to whom the Merciful shall grant permission, and who shall say that which is right."

God, addressing Mohammed, said:—"And thy Lord shall come, and the angels rank by rank."

Likewise, Mohammed said:—"On the day whereon the heaven shall appear in a visible smoke."

He also spoke of the sun and moon, the falling and scattering of stars, the cleaving of heaven, the trembling of the pillars of earth, thus:—"When the sun shall be folded up; and when the stars shall fall; and when the mountains shall be made to pass away." "When the heaven shall be cloven asunder, and when the stars shall be scattered."

"When the heaven shall be rent asunder, and shall obey its Lord, and shall be capable (thereof); and when the earth shall be stretched out."

"When the earth shall be shaken as by earthquake; and the earth shall cast forth her burdens."

"O men, fear your Lord. Verily, the shock of the (last) Hour will be a terrible thing. On the day whereon ye shall see it, every woman who giveth suck shall forget (the infant) which she suckleth, and every (female) that is with young shall cast her burden; and thou shalt see men (seemingly) drunk, yet they shall not be really drunk: but the punishment of God will be severe."

Speaking of the changing of heaven and earth, and their renewal, he said:—"But they make not a due estimation of God: since the whole earth

(shall be but) his handful, on the day of Resurrection; and the heavens shall be rolled together in his right hand. Praise be unto him! and far be he exalted above what they associate with him!"

"The day (will come, when) the earth shall be changed into another earth, and the heavens (into other heavens); and men shall come forth before God, the One, the Mighty!"

There are also many other verses which cannot be quoted for lack of space.

The same signs are spoken of in the Gospels, as revealed by God in St. Matt., ch. xxiv., v. 29:—"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven. . . ."

This passage contains all the signs spoken of in the Koran, concerning the descending of the Lord in the clouds with angels, the darkening of the sun, the shaking of the powers of heaven, and other fearful events. Likewise, clear points are recorded in the Second Epistle of St. Peter, ch. iii., concerning the passing away of the heavens and earth, the melting of the elements, and the coming of the new heaven and earth with their light and effulgence. The 21st ch. of Revelation also contains prophecies concerning the new heaven and new earth, the passing away of former things, and other signs and tokens. Similar texts are revealed in the Old Testament, as follows:—

Deut., ch. xxviii., vs. 23, 24:—"And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The Lord shall

make the rain of thy land power and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed." Also in Isaiah, ch. lxx., vs. 17-19:—"For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying." Likewise, ch. lxxvi., v. 22:—"For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain."

Concerning the clouds, gloom and desolation, it is prophesied in Zephaniah, ch. i., vs. 14, 15:—"The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." And in Joel, ch. ii., v. 10:—"The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining." And in v. 31:—"The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come."

Similar signs are also prophesied in the book of Haggai, ch. ii., vs. 6, 7:—"For thus saith the Lord

of hosts; yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts."

It will clearly and manifestly appear to those who consider and reflect upon these passages, that by these verses all the prophets meant to explain the same fact, and that all of them used these words in an allegorical and symbolical manner to illustrate the same subject; although these prophets were of different languages and appeared in different countries and times. The essential cause of this fact is that the Revealer of all the Books, the Sender of all the Prophets, and the Appointer of all the Messengers, is the One God, as explained in the treatise upon "Divine Unity." And as He has prophesied the coming of the One Great Day of Resurrection, the signs and tokens given thereof must be the same.

Fourth,—Verily, all the Holy Books contain texts and clear statements to the effect that the above-mentioned signs are closed up and sealed; that the door of understanding them is barred until the coming of the "end" and the Day of Resurrection; and that whosoever attempts to interpret them before the coming of that great day, will be in error. This fact is referred to in Isaiah, ch. vi., vs. 10-12:—"Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and

be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land."

Likewise, Daniel, ch. xii., v. 4:—"But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." vs. 9, 10:—"And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand."

All these verses clearly indicate and prove that the real sense of the signs given concerning the Day of God, the Appearance of the Lord, and the coming of the end, was closed up and sealed, so that no one could understand them until the coming of the "end" and the advent of the "Hour." Even then, the wicked were not to understand them, but only the righteous and just ones should apprehend their real meanings.

In 1888 A. D. (1306 A. H.), when the writer travelled from Teheran to Isfahan, and stopped a few days in the city of Kashan, there was a meeting held in the house of a Jewish merchant called Lazarus, for the purpose of investigating and considering the arguments of the Manifestation and the signs of the coming of the day of Resurrection.

For in those days the promulgation of the Word and the spreading of this faith among the Jews had just begun. The meeting was composed of prominent Jewish rabbis and men of learning. Three of their most celebrated doctors were present. The oldest among them was named Mordecai, a man over seventy years of age, of fair complexion, cheerful face, very learned in Hebrew, and quick in scientific debate. When the proofs of the Cause of God were discussed in full detail, the weakness of Mordecai's doubts were exposed and no ground left for his objections and refutations. Nevertheless, he clung to the non-fulfillment of the outward and literal sense of the signs and tokens. He said:—"That the appearance of the Promised One must necessarily be preceded by the darkening of the sun and moon, the falling of stars, the dwelling together of the sheep and wolf, the calf and the lion, the infant playing with serpents and asps, and the scattering of the holy people in all directions; whereas not one of these signs had appeared, so that the truth of the prophets' promises in these texts had not been realized." Then we answered him, saying:—"O honorable man! Do you alone understand outward meaning and literal sense from these verses, or do all the Jews likewise interpret them in the same way?" "Yes"; he replied, "all the Jews, both in the East and West, Asiatics as well as Europeans, understand these prophecies in the same manner, and interpret them as I do; therefore they do not give credit to the

claims of Jesus and Mohammed, nor do they regard them as being the true Prophets spoken of by Moses. For none of these clear signs were manifest in Jesus and Mohammed, nor did the prophetic promises come to pass in their days." We answered:—"We have read in the book of Isaiah, that God commanded him to seal the hearts of the Israelites and shut their eyes, so that they may not understand the meaning of the Holy Book. He likewise commanded Daniel to seal the Book and shut up its meanings. Is this true or not?" He said:—"Yes, this is an indisputable fact which cannot be doubted." We then said:—"As one great prophet was commanded to seal your hearts and shut your eyes, so that you might not understand the Book; and as another great prophet was commanded to seal the Book, shut up its meanings and veil its purposes from all mankind,—in such a case how can a discerning man rely upon your comprehension and interpretation of the Book, and put his trust in your explanations and elucidations? For if your interpretations of the Holy Books be regarded as reliable and your understanding of the texts as true, then the sealing of hearts and shutting up of the Book would not be fulfilled." Mordecai was silenced and unable to answer, while the believers rejoiced.

The Holy Gospels also contain numerous verses and evidences of the sealing of the texts, the difficulty of understanding them, and the intricacy of their meanings. Even the disciples of Christ, who were the chosen of God and His saints, fre-

quently did not understand the meanings of words, and asked Christ to solve their mysteries. For He mostly spoke to them in symbols and allegories, and taught them through parables, as is said by St. Matt., ch. xiii., vs. 34, 35:—"All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world."

It is evident to intelligent minds that the commands, exhortations, ordinances and regulations revealed in the Holy Books, are not concealed matters and have not sealed meanings; therefore Christ did not explain them in parables and symbols, or cover them under the veils of allegories and allusions. Verily, the prophets revealed commands and ordinances in a clear manner, without concealment and obscurity, so that the laws of devotion and conduct may thereby be secured among men, and human society sustained throughout all centuries and cycles. But by the "things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world," is meant the mysteries of the "day of Judgment" and "Resurrection," the "darkening of the sun and moon," the "falling of stars," the "coming of the Lord in the Clouds," the "rising of the dead from the earth," the illumination of the earth from the "east to the west" with the light of the Lord of Lords, and other great signs revealed in the Book; the purpose and

meaning of which have been ever obscure and sealed to the students and seekers.

But our Lord Christ (Glory and Beha be upon Him!) promised that these seals should be opened and these prophecies understood at the time of the Lord's coming from Heaven, Who would then explain their reality. St. John, ch. xvi., vs. 12, 13:—"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." Likewise, St. John, ch. vi., v. 27:—"Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for *it hath God the Father sealed."

It is clear to every one endowed with perception that the source of everlasting life is no other than the Words of God; as is said by Christ in answer to the tempter; St. Matt., ch. iv., v. 4:—"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

As God the Almighty has sealed His Words, which are the source of salvation and the origin of life, it is therefore not possible for any one to unseal them, except Himself. Thus revelation has been assigned to Prophets, and the interpretation and unveiling of the Words given to the Exalted Lord at the time of His coming from Heaven to remove the covering from all things.

*This pronoun refers to the "meat" in the Arabic Bible, from which the author has quoted the verse. But the English version refers it to the "Son of Man" and gives a masculine pronoun ("him") instead of "it." The rendering here is according to the Arabic text quoted by the author.—Translator.

The verses of the Koran also clearly indicate that the interpretation of the Words of God will be effected at His coming and at its appointed and determined time; Ch. Al-A'raf:—"And now we have brought unto them a book: we have explained it with knowledge; a direction and mercy unto people who shall believe. Do they wait for any other than the interpretation thereof? On the day whereon the interpretation thereof shall come, they who had forgotten the same before, shall say, 'Now the Messengers of our Lord came unto us with truth': shall we therefore have any intercessors, who will intercede for us? Or shall we be sent back, that we may do other works than what we did? But now have they found themselves in loss: and that which they impiously imagined hath fled from them." Likewise, in the Chapter of "Jonas," he said:—"But they have charged that with falsehood, the knowledge whereof they do not comprehend, neither hath the interpretation thereof come unto them."

The prominent men among the tribe of Koraish and the Arab chiefs disbelieved in the possibility of the fulfillment of such signs. They said "Mohammed deludes his followers, infatuates his companions, and gives them promises and hopes of things which cannot be realized or even imagined to occur." Therefore the above-mentioned verse was revealed, clearly indicating that they had meanings and interpretations, which God will surely manifest in an appointed day, when the Manifestation of the Self-subsistent Lord will unveil their

truth and open their seals. By interpretation is meant bringing to light the esoteric meanings expressed in symbolical words; which meanings remained concealed and hidden during cycles and generations, and were not understood even by the loftiest minds, until the time when God permitted the removal of their veils and the opening of their seals. Then the doors of their paradise opened, the fragrances of their signs were diffused, and filled all the regions of the world with their sweet perfumes. Then the rose-petals of truth were scattered upon their breezes, and the nostrils of the righteous were perfumed with their sweet odor. Then the truths of the Holy Books became manifest to the possessors of quickened hearts and calm souls, which fact will appear from the interpretation which will be given to the men of brilliant insight and sound minds.

The Fourth Introduction.

Treats of Comparing the Four Proofs with the Manifestations of the Command of God.

O ye righteous ones! Now that ye have understood the reality of the four arguments, the quality of their evidence and indication of the truth of the Manifestations of the Command of God, know (may God illumine your beautiful faces with His manifest and clear Light, and strengthen your exalted words with the signs of prosperity and success!) that, verily, these proofs and arguments confirm the truth of the Manifestation of God in this present time much more clearly and evidently than they demonstrated the truth of the Manifestations in bygone ages and past generations. As heretofore we have discussed the substance of these arguments, their limits, definition, and the validity of their evidence in a general way, we now speak of their specific relationship with each one of the Manifestations of God, so that it may be proven and become apparent that these arguments are weighty and complete in this Most Great Manifestation and glorious exalted Dawn. For these arguments demonstrate the Manifestation of our Lord Beha (Exalted is His Name!) more abundantly than they prove the mission of the prophets previous to Him. Therefore, whosoever denies this great Manifestation and rejects His clear proofs, cannot demonstrate the truth of any one of

the former religions; as will be conclusively shown in the following demonstrations.

Consider (may God the Exalted assist you with His Spirit!) the mission of His Holiness Moses (Peace be upon Him!).

In view of the four proofs already described and explained, let us ascertain by what argument the Israelites can demonstrate the truth of His religion.

As to the Book, which we have regarded as being the most complete proof and the greatest argument: The only part of the Book which can be attributed to Moses is the Taurat or Pentateuch of the Old Testament. To be more critically accurate, the only part of the Pentateuch which can be directly attributed to Moses,—as, God willing, will be explained,—is the Law of the Ten Commandments, revealed in the 5th chapter of Deut., and the Song and Blessings recorded in Deut., chs. xxxii., xxxiii. The rest of the Pentateuch contains laws and ordinances written and enacted by Joshua the son of Nun, the successor of Moses. This was added to the Taurat, as is evident in the 25th and 26th verses of the 24th chapter of the Book of Joshua. As to the histories and legends: these were written and compiled by Ezra the priest, after the emigration from Babylon and the return of the tribes to Palestine, subsequent to the second restoration of Jerusalem under Artaxerxes of Persia; which fact is manifest after a careful investigation of ancient history.

As to the Logical Proof, that is the heavenly Power bestowed upon the Manifestations of the

Command of God for the purpose of instituting laws and reforming the morals of humanity; its extent appears from the comparative effect which their words make in the guidance of peoples, while at the same time it is connected with the capacity of men to accept this guidance. It is an evident fact that the prophetic word, during the Manifestation of Moses, was effective only in guiding one nation, that is, the Israelites, the former inhabitants of Palestine; for during 1,500 years the Word of Moses and the Israelitish prophets influenced but this one nation. No result appeared from it among other peoples and countries.

As to the prophecies: No book of the prophets Enoch, Noah, and Abraham, who lived previous to Moses, exists; nor is Moses' name spoken of or alluded to in the books of the founders of the other religions, such as the Buddhists, Brahmanas, Zoroastrians, or Sabeans. Therefore, no prophecy exists which can prove the Mosaic Religion. There is but one passage from Enoch, the 7th from Adam, whom some of the prominent historians have supposed to be "Edris," spoken of in the Arabic books. This passage is recorded in the Epistle of St. Jude. It refers to and clearly indicates the Manifestation of God, or that of the Lord with "ten thousands of His Saints." This prophecy has no connection with the Manifestation of Moses, nor with any other prophetic Mission.

As to the Miracles: The only source from which it could be proven that miracles have proceeded

from Moses, is the record of the Five Books, or the testimony given by those who came after him, such as our Lord Christ (Glory be upon Him!) and Mohammed. As the Jews have denied the truth of these two Manifestations, there is nothing more difficult for them than to prove the Miracles of Moses to the Buddhists and Brahamans, as well as to the other great nations. The only authority for the miracles of Moses are the writings of one man, Ezra the priest, and this is a very weak authority; as is evident to the men of insight and discernment.

Now, consider (may God the Exalted assist you through the Power of His Kingdom!) the Cause of our Lord Christ (Glory be to Him!), the proofs and arguments which demonstrate the truth of His Blessed Word and the validity of His Holy Mission.

As to the Divine Book: The Holy Gospels alone contain teachings which can be regarded as the true Words of God; and these teachings do not exceed the contents of a few pages. The rest of the Gospels consist of the traditions and records written and inscribed by His disciples or the disciples of His disciples, concerning His life and circumstances. Moreover, His teachings are not preserved in their original language, which was the dialect of the people who inhabited the Syrian countries at that time; nor were they written in His own days. But they were written and recorded after His Ascension to the Heaven of the Nearness of God, at periods variously estimated by

the European historians as between forty and seventy years subsequent to His birth. They have been translated into Latin and Greek later.

As to the Miracles and Signs which have proceeded from Him: "The authority for these is the four Gospels. They have been narrated therein by four men; two were His apostles and the other two disciples of their disciples. Moreover, many of their texts contain certain allegories and symbolisms which very often bear other than literal meanings. Consider the 9th ch. of the Gospel of St. John, where it is recorded that Christ (Glory be upon Him!) restored the blind man, and on account of this there was a division among the Pharisees. It is also recorded in the 39th verse of the said chapter:—"And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind." This verse clearly shows that by blindness He has meant ignorance and error, and by sight, knowledge and guidance. This meaning is explicitly proven by the next verses, thus:—"And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."

Consequently, how can it be understood that the sight given to the blind man, as recorded in the first part of this chapter, was not of this kind? Especially is this true when we consider the customs of the Jewish writers in those olden times.

They made use of enigmas and allegories in their books and writings, and concealed their meanings under subtle and intricate symbols. It is said by the learned historian, John Lawrence Mosheim, of the University of Gottingen, in his "Ecclesiastical History," translated from the original Latin by James Murdoch, of the U. S.; also translated into Arabic by Henry H. Jessep, of U. S., and published in 1875 A. D. in Beyrouth (Syria); as follows:—

Part II., Ch. 3, Cent. 1, Par. 2:—"Those who expounded the Scriptures, studied simplicity and plainness. Yet it is not to be denied, that even in this century, the perverse Jewish custom of obscuring the plain language of Scripture, by forced and frigid allegories, and of diverting words from their natural and proper meaning in order to extort from them some recondite sense, found some admirers and imitators among Christians. Besides others, Barnabas, whose epistle is still extant, is proof of them."

If one ponders over the detail of what we have said upon the question of Miracles; studies our arguments to the effect that God the Exalted has refused to perform things in any other manner than in accordance with natural laws; and reflects upon what the distinguished and learned Mosheim has recorded as to the Jewish custom of using obscure and symbolic allegories, there can be no doubt that the records of giving sight to the blind and quickening the dead, refer to mental insight and spiritual life. For the same meanings are

applied to them in many places in the very texts of the Heavenly Books and Prophetic Words.

As to the Logical Proof: That is the power of the penetration of His Word and the sway of His Religion. This power in Christ so far surpassed the penetrative power of the Word of Moses, that there is no ground for a just investigator who does not indulge in false arguments to doubt that it was the Divine Word and of a Spiritual authority. That His Holy Word proved effective in numerous nations, and was conducive to the guidance of great peoples, is a fact that can only be denied by an arrogant and ignorant person or by a disputing sophist. Yet centuries and generations passed before it proved effective through the assistance of the Roman Cæsars. Then it poured forth with a power the like of which had never before appeared in any of the other Divine Religions. Consequently, many of the prominent historians have even doubted the very existence of Christ (Glory be upon Him!). There are always many who have the same tendency, for nothing about Him and His Religion is recorded in any of the histories written in the first and second centuries after Him, by either Romans, Jews, Persians, Indians, or Chinese. This is a clear proof of the fact that His Cause had not played any important role in the first two centuries, nor had it been so widely spread as to be recorded by the historians.

Mosheim has written in his "History of the Church" (Part I., Ch. 2, Cent. 13, Pars. 2 and 3), as follows:—

"The Latin writers of those times (thirteenth cent.), often complain of public enemies of the Christian religion, and even of mockers of the Supreme Being. Nor are these complaints entirely vain and incredible. For men of discernment who critically inspected the religion which the Roman pontiffs and their servants and friends preached and inculcated as being the only true religion taught by Christ; and which they maintained by fire and the sword, might easily be led to believe, that Christianity was a fabrication invented and propagated by the priests for their own advantage; and especially was such a conclusion easy, as there were none to teach them better. Besides, the Aristotelian philosophy, which reigned in all the schools of Europe and was regarded as sound reason, led not a few to discard the doctrines commonly held and preached respecting divine providence, the immortality of the Soul, the Creation of the World, and other points, and thus to become the promoters of irreligion.

"At the head of all the enemies of Christianity, stood the emperor Frederic II., if credit is to be given to the sovereign pontiff Gregory IX., who in the year 1239, charged him before all the kings and princes of Europe, with saying that the whole world had been deceived by three barrators, (impostors), Jesus Christ, Moses, and Mohammed. This heavy charge the emperor deemed it necessary to refute, by a public profession of his religious faith. It rested on the testimony of some German princes, and particularly of Henry Raspo,

landgrave of Thuringia, who said they had heard Frederic utter such language. Perhaps something like this did fall from the lips of Frederic, when in a violent passion, for he was not infrequently imprudent; and among the many learned men that attended him, there were some from the Aristotelian school who might have suggested to him such impious thoughts. Hence a fabulous story was handed down to posterity, respecting a detestable book on the three impostors, which was said to have been written either by the emperor himself, or by Peter de Vincis, a native of Capua and a man of great credit and influence, who was the emperor's prime minister."

These statements of this historian who, far from being accused of unorthodoxy, was firm and staunch in Christianity, clearly indicate that the antagonists of Christianity had not discovered any mentioning of Christ's name; otherwise they would not have denied Him, but would have refuted the teachings given by the Roman pontiffs. Indeed, many of the people of deception and falsehood among those who did not recognize the power of the Divine Word and its independence from human intrigues, have introduced His Name into the old historical works, so that they might thereby withstand the opposers, and defend the prophets and messengers. Yet this has been more harmful to Christianity than profitable, as they had intended it to be; for their intrigues and machinations were divulged, thus increasing the suspicions of the deniers. This is the case with

the translation of the book of Josephus, the Jew, made from the European languages into Arabic. Into this translation they have introduced the Name of Christ; at the same time suggesting to some of the writers of scientific newspapers published in Cairo, Egypt, to insert in them that the book Josephus is not possessed by Jews. Thus they intended to conceal their artifice and ruse. All this, notwithstanding the fact that many manuscript copies of Josephus are in possession of the Jews, and that we have investigated and discussed it in the city of Hamadan, Persia. Even in the original copies on file in public libraries in Europe, no reference is made to the name of Christ. Dr. Keith, of England, has clearly explained this point, in his work upon the testimonies given by the Israelitish prophets, demonstrating the Mission of our Lord Jesus Christ (Glory be to Him!). Therein he says that Josephus has done his utmost to make no mention of the name of Christ in his book. This book has been translated from the English into Persian by the Abbots of the Church, in the City of Ormiah, Azerbeyjan, Persia, and published in Edinburgh in 1846.

To resume. Those who are heedless of the power of the Word of God, have artfully interpolated the name of Christ into the old histories, supposing this to be profitable to pure Christianity. Yet by this, they have done Christianity a mischief which no one denies except the ignorant; for the exposure of their artifice caused numerous divisions and parties to appear among Christians,

who were thus led not only to deny this Divine Religion, but the very existence of Christ (Peace be upon Him!). The proof of the existence of Christ, is in no need of such intrigues, or of the testimony of historians. His blessed existence is confirmed by two great evidences:—First, that which the Manifestations of the Command of God give of His existence and truth, which testimony is no other than that of God, and is more effective than anything in the world. Consider the evidence given by Mohammed as to Christ being the “Spirit of God.” Mohammed’s word has to such an extent convinced the world and satisfied nations, that about three hundred millions of Musulmans testify that Jesus is the “Spirit of God,” and that He is the “Word of God.” This witness, given by Mohammed, they engrave in their hearts and preserve it from generation to generation; whereas, before the appearance of Mohammed, they did not know Christ, nor did they acknowledge His truth.

Verily, all the people of the world will be humbled before the Name of our Lord Christ, and will shortly testify that He is the exalted Word; inasmuch as our Lord the Abha (Glorified is His Supreme Name!) has borne witness of Him. St. John has recorded in his Gospel, in reference to this point (ch. viii., v. 18), thus:—“I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.”

The witness borne by the Father is that which is borne by the Lord Beha, because the idea that

testimony is given by the Essence in any way except through Its Manifestations, is unreasonable, as we have already explained and demonstrated in the subject of Divine Unity.

Now that the testimony of two Manifestations of God, relative to the existence of our Lord Christ, has convinced half the population of the earth as to the truth of His Word and the validity of His Claim, of what importance can be the testimony of a few historians, whether they acknowledge or deny Him?

The second evidence is that an effect can be adduced as the proof of a cause; and this is a rational and visible evidence. There is no doubt that the Christian Religion, which has changed the conditions of the old world, is an effect, and every effect must, of necessity, have a cause and origin. No man or body of men has ever claimed to be the originator of this religion, nor has its institution ever been attributed to any one except Jesus Christ (Glory be to Him!). Consequently, it is obvious that He has been its only founder and sole upholder. When a wise man reflects upon the origin of this invincible Power which has surpassed the powers of the World; when he considers the supernatural ken and judgment which have reformed the defects of nations, healed the sicknesses of hearts, and reconciled tribes of peoples, it would be unreasonable for him to think that this origin could be veiled and obscure, or wrapped up in the cobwebs of oblivion and negligence. If man permits himself to doubt such a clear matter, how much

more would he be apt to dispute all subjects? Such scepticism would confuse the order of society, and would corroborate sophistical theories.

Having treated of these subjects which needed explanation, we will now return to the point which we were discussing, in connection with the proofs whereby the truth of the Mission of Christ can be demonstrated.

As to the prophecies revealed in the Holy Books, contained in the Old Testament: when we observe the essential Oneness existing among the Manifestations of the Command of God, which we have demonstrated in speaking of the Divine Unity, there is no doubt that most of these prophecies, testified of and were fulfilled in the appearance of our Lord Christ; which fact was confirmed by those who appeared after Him. But when we consider the individual characteristics of these holy Manifestations; personal qualities which differentiate and distinguish each one of them from the other, there is no doubt that many prophecies were not fulfilled in Christ's first coming. This will be explained in the commentaries upon the texts of the Scriptures, with the assistance of God the Lord of Lords.

A fact which must not pass unnoticed by the possessors of insight, is that the commentators of the Holy Books have unanimously endeavored to interpret all the prophecies recorded in the Old Testament and the writings of the Israelitish prophets, into the Manifestation of our Lord Christ. In this endeavor they have mainly exerted

themselves and spent their lives and property; strenuously attempting to demonstrate to the seekers, that the purpose of these prophecies is none other than showing forth the events of the day of His Manifestation and Mission, and describing His sufferings and trials. Some have re-enforced this point by artifice, some by violence. Others, finding themselves unable to convince people by argument, have tried to coerce them by the power of the sword and fire; a fact testified to by the histories of every country. Moreover, it has been customary with most of the theologians and commentators of the Holy Books, to satisfy the people and prove their religious tenets by a method of argument called "economical"; no matter whether it agreed with truth and fact or not. With them, the only purpose has been to overcome antagonists, relying upon their customary principle,—"The end justifies the means." Absolutism and the lack of freedom which then prevailed among nations, assisted them in fulfilling their aims and rendering their beliefs prevalent. So arose false, inverted, remote and insignificant interpretations of the Holy Books. To this point, Mosheim refers in his "History of the Church" (Part II., Cent. 3, Ch. 3, Pars. 10, 11):—"But it must by no means pass unnoticed, that the discussions instituted against the opposers of Christianity in this age (3rd cent.), departed far from the primitive simplicity, and the correct method of controversy. For the Christian doctors, who were in part educated in the schools of rhetoricians and sophists, inconsiderately trans-

ferred the arts of these teachers to the Cause of Christianity; and therefore considered it of no importance, whether an antagonist were confounded by these artifices, or by solid arguments. Thus that mode of disputing, which the ancients called economical, [It signifies to do a thing artfully and dexterously, or with cunning and sagacity, as a shrewd manager of a household controls those under him—see footnote given by Murdock], and which had victory rather than truth for its object, was almost universally approved. And the Platonists contributed to the currency of the practice, by asserting that it was no sin for a person to employ falsehood and fallacies for the support of truth, when it was in danger of being borne down.”

“This vicious inclination to circumvent and confound an adversary, rather than confute him with sound argument, produced also a multitude of books falsely bearing on their front the names of certain distinguished men. For the greater part of mankind, being influenced more by the authority of names, than by arguments and Scripture testimony, the writers conceived they must prefix names of the greatest weight to their books, in order to oppose successfully their adversaries. Hence those canons which were falsely ascribed to the apostles:”

Of these canons, Murdock speaks in the footnote, thus:—“(The apostolic canons are eighty-five ecclesiastical laws or rules, professedly enacted by the Apostles, and collected and preserved by Clemens Romanus. The matter of them is an-

cient; for they describe the customs and institutions of the Christians, particularly of the Greek and Oriental churches, in the second and third centuries. But the phraseology indicates a compiler being in the third century. See W. Beveridge's Notes on these Canons, and his 'Codex Canonum Eccles., Primitivæ Vindicatus et Illustrat,' London, 1678, 4to—Schl.)."

Likewise, Mosheim has recorded in the events of the fourth century (Book II., Part I., Par. 23):—"For it is manifest that the untiring zeal of the bishops and other holy men, the pure and devout lives which many of the Christians exhibited, the translations of the sacred Volume, and the excellence of the Christian religion, were as efficient motives with many persons, as the arguments from worldly advantage and disadvantage were with some others. As for miracles, I cheerfully unite with those who look with contempt on the wonders ascribed to Paul, Antony, and Martin. I also grant, that many events were inconsiderably regarded as miracles, which were according to the laws of nature; not to mention likewise pious frauds."

There are many similar statements in this book and in other credible historical works, all of which clearly indicate that the writers of the early centuries, who are considered more brilliant and pure than those of the later centuries, and whose works became the foundation and ground-work upon which the beliefs and writings of recent centuries are based, cared more to triumph over and discomfit their antagonists than to rely upon truth

and explain the real fact. They were more anxious to satisfy the Jews and compel them to accept their commentaries, than to convince the Pagans; for the former were the root of the tree of Christianity, and the source through which the Holy Scriptures had been revealed. They did their utmost, and availed themselves of every possible strategy and means, in order to persuade that intelligent and unfortunate people that the purpose of all the prophecies given in the Holy Scriptures concerning the coming of the "Lord," referred to the Manifestation of Jesus Christ; and that all prophecy predicted the events of His days, and foreshadowed His sufferings and afflictions. Yet their diligence in interpretation and fabrication, and their zealous attempts to demonstrate this fulfillment, far from bringing the Jews nearer to Christ, withheld them from believing in Him. For the Jews who read the Book every day with perfect attention, consulting and depending upon it in all their affairs, were cognizant of the purport of the prophecies, and knew the falsity of such economical (forcible) argument. They were eye witnesses to the fact that the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures, especially those which foreshadowed the end of their nation, did not conform nor correspond to the Manifestation of our Lord Christ (Glory be to Him!), although the Christian commentators insisted upon their correspondence, by availing themselves of this "economical" mode or argument, to maintain it. Verily, the prophecies of these Holy Books,—for the preservation of which the Jews shed their

blood, sacrificed their property and children, and upon which alone they rested their hopes,—proclaim with the clearest voice that after the decline of the dominion of the Israelites; after their scattering and dispersion throughout all countries; their suffering every calamity; their being cursed and reviled by all nations; after their country being possessed by foreigners and trampled under the feet of barbarous tribes; their cities and towns deserted and ruined;—then the powerful Lord will appear, His shining Beauty will dawn forth from the East, and become manifest in the Holy Land. His voice will be raised from the holy mountain; He will assemble the scattered Israelites from the east, west, north and south; He will gather them from out all peoples. Then, according to these prophecies, they will proceed from darkness toward light, their sorrow will be changed into joy, their unbelief into real faith, their rebellion into obedience, their shame into honor, and their weakness into power. They will become blessed after having been execrated, victorious after having been subdued; the glory of the Holy Land will be restored, and distant nations will be blessed thereby. The mouth of the Promised Lord will change its name of the Holy Land, and the blessed and excellent “Branch” will build His Temple. It will be named “Desire” after its having been rejected; it will be sought for after having been deserted. Its lost honor will be eternally established and its peoples will be firmly planted therein. All the prophesied events will happen at their appointed time, which

is determined in the Book, and known to men of discernment. Superstitions will not change them, nor will the alterations of the transposers and the doubts of the sceptical shake them. These predicted events were reversed at the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ. At that time, the Israelites were established and tranquil in the Holy Land, but after the Appearance of Christ, they were scattered by the conquest of Titus the Roman, who destroyed Jerusalem and slew over one million of the Jews, according to historical record. Afterward, he sold the remnant of them to the nations, as beasts of burden. Their humiliation and misery still increased when Omar, the Mohammedan Kalif, vanquished the city of Elias (Jerusalem), and made a compact with Saphronius, Bishop of Jerusalem, forbidding the Jews to inhabit Palestine. With this decree and compact he destroyed their daily sacrifice; the Holy Land fell into the hands of foreigners and became the arena of murder and field of conflict between the Arabs, Romans, Turks, Crusaders and Mamelukes. The Jewish cities were ruined, their buildings overthrown, their dwellings desolated, their societies scattered; and during these long generations, this forlorn people became the plaything of storms of calamities, the subject of whirlpools of afflictions, until the nineteenth century. This was the century of the Dawn of the Light of lights, the time of the rending of veils, and the rise of the Sun of Knowledge in the brightness of day. Then these ruinous storms and fatal convulsions were partly hushed; the Holy Land at-

tained tranquility and quietude, and is still advancing therein, until that which was foreshadowed by the prophets in bygone centuries and ages, shall be fulfilled in it.

The Holy Land was flourishing and was inhabited by the Jews before Christ appeared; but after His Manifestation, they became scattered, and none of the prophecies of which we have spoken were fulfilled at His advent. Thus, Christ cannot be accounted as the fulfilment of those prophecies.

The commentators have devised a way to close this breach, and to bridge over this chasm, which cannot be effected by any artifice. They have interpreted the word "Israelite," recorded in the Holy Scriptures, to mean the "Christian Church," in order to demonstrate that the prophecies were fulfilled with the appearance of Jesus Christ (Glory be to Him!), and were realized in His Advent. Although we agree with this interpretation in some passages, yet most of the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures clearly indicate that they refer to the children of Israel, and not to the believers who might join them through the Spirit of Faith. They announce that the Israelites whom God had stricken with curse and degradation, are to return to blessing and restoration, as is plainly spoken of by Paul the Apostle in his Epistle to the Romans, ch. xi., vs. 25 to 27:—"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall

be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my Covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."

This text clearly shows that the Israelites will be saved and their sins taken away after the Manifestation of Christ; at the end of the days, when the Manifestation of the Lord will appear in Sion. Therefore how could the commentators interpret "children of Israel" as being the Christian Church?

In a similar way, they interpret the term "New Testament" to be the "Holy Gospels." The word "New Testament" (or Covenant) is recorded in Jeremiah, ch. xxxi., vs. 31 to 34, as follows:—"Behold, the days come, said the Lord, that I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. Not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their Lord, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Have the prophecies given in these verses been fulfilled? Did the Lord forgive their iniquity and sins? Were they ever without need of a teacher or adviser to exhort and lead them to believe in their Lord; so that the Holy Gospels might become the "New Testament" (or Covenant)? Who-soever reads these verses with earnest attention, will duly realize that the prophecies in this chapter refer to the Israelites themselves, and not to those who have joined them by faith. For the Israelites, termed in Scripture, "the back-sliding daughters," are the children of Ephraim, the capital of whose country was Samaria, and the children of Judah, the capital of whose country was Jerusalem.

It is also reported in the Book of Jeremiah, ch. xxxi., vs. 27, 28:—"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the Lord." Does the sense of these prophecies refer to the Christian Church?

Moreover, the prophesied restoration of the Holy Land is an everlasting restoration which will never be overthrown; a permanent holiness which will never be effaced; for it is clearly stated at the end of the chapter, that "It shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more forever." After the ascension of our Lord Christ (Glory be upon Him!), the Holy Land was destroyed twice; the

first time, by the command of Titus and Adrian. Afterward, the Israelitish people were scattered, and the desolation of the Holy Land and the dispersion of its people were completed by the conquest of Islam, at which time the daily sacrifice was taken away, as we have formerly explained. As these facts were evident to the Jews, the explanations and interpretations made by the Christians, did not satisfy them. Nay rather, such methods kept them farther from the truth. So they denied Christ and refused to investigate and enquire into His Cause. The delegates of the great pontiffs during every century, attempted to compel the Israelites to accept these interpretations, and join the sacred Church. As they could not satisfy them through the power of argument, they laboured to convince them by the power of the sword and rigid persecution.

Mosheim has recorded in his "History of the Church, Part I., Cent. vi., Ch. i., Par. 3, thus:—"But it should be added, that far more were (the Jews) induced to make profession of Christianity, by the rewards offered by the princes and by the fear of punishment, than by the force of arguments. In Gaul during the reign of Childeric, the Jews were compelled to receive baptism: and the same thing was done in Spain."

To resume. As on one hand, the Jews saw these confusing interpretations, and on the other, false arguments and rigid punishments, they doubted not that these oppressions were taught by Christ. So, bewildered and led astray in the desert of re-

moteness and error, they clung to their own ideas, until finally the warnings and prophecies of the prophets became fulfilled in them. Although they deserved punishment for their denial of Christ and objection to the chastity of the Virgin Mary, by which their adversity and shame before God were increased; yet the greater part of their sin in remaining unbelievers, is due to the aforementioned commentators, sophists and persecutors, who alienated the Jews from the truth, and obscured the path unto them. Had the commentators interpreted the verses according to their true purpose and demonstrated the truth of the Word of our Lord Christ in the right manner, they would have made it easy for the Jews to embrace the Truth, and would have brought them nearer to the highway of obedience. For there are proofs and verses in the very texts of the Bible and in the prophetic Books, which clearly explain the truth of our Lord Christ; and had the commentators held to them, they would have been in no need of false argument and persecution. God willing, we will explain this point in the course of our interpretations regarding the subject.

Now consider, O ye beloved ones, the Mohammedan cause, and the proofs whereby its adherents endeavor to prove the truth of Mohammed.

As to the Heavenly Book and Divine Revelation: This they hold to be the Koran. Its texts were written in the days of Mohammed, and collected and arranged in the days of His khalifs by congregations composed of His chief followers and saints.

The Moslems, notwithstanding their variance and difference of sects and creeds, have universally agreed upon one book, even without entertaining any disagreement or difference as to one word or letter in it. Yet it is but one volume, containing thirty sections, the texts of which, they maintain, were revealed gradually to Mohammed at different times, during twenty-three years. Mohammed was of the tribe of Koraish, a tribe noted for eloquence and speech among the Arabs. Even the majority of the Mohammedan doctors have regarded the eloquent language and elegant style of the Koran, as a perfect proof and decisive miracle. But we have refuted this point in several books, and have explained the reason why heavenly Revelations are miraculous, showing the manner whereby they are distinguished from the words of man; in a way that should convince every one of discernment and perception.

As to the penetration of His Word and the propagation of His religion: this was not fully witnessed, except among the Arabs, until the second century of the Hejira, when it was introduced among the Persians, the inhabitants of the Caucasus, the Turks and Indians. The conquests of the Islam princes, in the first century, reached eastward to Furgana (near China), and westward to Sicily and Spain. The Islam princes, with a few exceptions, it is said, did not compel any nation to accept the religion, for they gave people the choice between paying taxes or embracing the faith.

The success of the Mohammedan conquerors was sufficient inducement for people to embrace a religion far more advanced than their ancient idolatry and fire-worship; especially when we add to this, the attractive simplicity of life of the Mohammedan devotees, who were numerous at that time. Notwithstanding this, the inhabitants of the Caspian countries and Trans-Euxine provinces, did not accept Mohammedanism before the second and third century of Hejira, as we have mentioned above.

As to the miracles and wonders which it is said were demanded from Mohammed by his adversaries, and which the Mohammedan doctors are craftily attempting to prove in his behalf; these are disproved by the clear texts of the Koran. There are verses in this book which plainly indicate that God the Exalted did not wish to show forth any sign in the Islam Manifestation, except the Book; for signs are warnings concerning destruction and ruin. It is recorded in the Koran, in the "chapter of the Israelites" ("The Night Journey," Sale's translation):—"Nothing hindered us from sending (thee) with miracles, except that the former (nations) have charged them with imposture. We gave unto (the tribe of) Thamûd (at their demand), the she-camel visible (to their sight); yet they dealt unjustly with her; and we send not (a prophet) with miracles, but to strike terror."

That is, God the Exalted has refused to send any miracles in the Manifestation of Mohammed; for the former nations, such as the Egyptian, Ad, and

Thamûd, demanded miracles from the prophets, then afterward charged them with imposture, and denied them; therefore God destroyed them on account of their denial. God does not send signs or miracles, except as a warning of destruction and threatening of desolation. There are many other similar verses in the Book, which we have spoken of in detail in "Fara-yed," "Dorar-el-Baheyeh," and "Fassl-ul-Khatab" (books by the same author).

As to the miracles which are said to have proceeded from Mohammed even before being demanded: These have no authority except the traditions and records which are not reliable save to those who wish to believe. And if we add to this, the weakness of miracles in proving the truth of a claimant to prophethood, as we have formerly explained, there would not remain anything worthy of reliance or production, as an argument. But there are prophecies concerning future events, recorded both in the Koran and in the authoritative traditions attributed to Him, which cannot be disregarded and rejected by any except a bigoted disputant. In them, Mohammed has foretold the conditions of His religion, and all that would happen to it, including its advance and decline, prosperity and adversity, weakness and power, subdivision, desolation, etc.; everything in full details and particulars, until the lapse and termination of its cycle.

Likewise, He foreshadowed the events which would happen at the end of His cycle, concerning the Manifestation of Mahdi (the Precursor), the

descent of the "Spirit of God" (Christ), the rise of false prophets, the appearance of impostors, the major Resurrection, the minor Resurrection, and their signs and tokens. These, He has also prophesied in full detail, including their dates and places; things which no one can apprehend through human comprehension or foretell through political forecasts. The like has never before been witnessed in the texts of any holy Manifestation previous to Him. Yet these traditions being collected during the second and third centuries of Hegira, before which they had been preserved in memories, and related by word of mouth, must needs contain some blunders and inconsistencies, due to human forgetfulness and mistakes. Moreover, the relating of prophetic traditions was regarded by the Moslems in those days, as a high dignity and calling, and was used as a means for the attainment to worldly aims, by ambitious men. The tyrant Khalifs who were constantly afraid of the pure lineage of Ali and the household of Mohammed, bought the adherence of some of their immediate companions and followers with gold. These faithless ones fabricated for them traditions in praise of the enemies of the imams of Mohammed's household, and sought by this artifice to turn away the attention of people from the family of Ali, and secure their own usurped dominion and khaliphate. In this way, trading in traditions, and markets for fabricating records were started, and thus truth and falsehood became intermingled. Books of such prophetic traditions were compiled, which the doc-

tors of religion accepted through fear, greed, and desire; which finally ended in misleading the people and casting them into the depths of degradation. Yet the possessors of clear insight were not prevented from recognizing the authentic traditions and distinguishing them from those which are not reliable. Verily, the words of the prophets and messengers, and the depositories of their wisdom and knowledge, are endowed with certain virtues and qualities which are not concealed from those capable of understanding them. By authentic traditions, we do not mean in the sense understood by Mohammedan doctors, both Shi-ite and Sunnite. For the Sunnites regard as authentic a tradition which agrees with their own creed and is related by one of their sect; disregarding every other tradition, even though it may be from a reliable and trustworthy source. Likewise, the Shi-ite doctors give no credit to the traditions which are not in accordance with their own doctrine. This does not satisfy any seeker of truth, nor can it be a means of distinguishing truth from falsehood, or removing discord; for no community agrees with the opinion of another. But to the followers of Truth, by an authentic tradition is meant one which conforms with the Book of God ("for it contains the explanation of all things"), or which agrees with a fact of real occurrence. Such are the traditions containing prophecies which have come to pass and are fulfilled.

To resume. The traditions predicting future events were proofs whereby the Moslems could

demonstrate the truth of the founder of their religion; but they themselves corrupted them and mixed with the truth they contained their own fabrications, in order to gain the favor of the tyrannical Khalifat of the lineage of Abi-Sofyan, the "Angel of the bottomless pit," spoken of in the 9th and 12th chapters of Revelation, and the "cursed tree" alluded to in the Koran. These are interpreted to mean this khalifat.

As to the prophecies given in the Holy Bible and in the Books of the other Israelitish prophets concerning Mohammed; these are as pure and limpid drops of water falling from the fissures of the rocks of involved enigmas, as we will, God permitting, set forth in future statements.

The prophecies given in the New Testament, concerning the appearance of Mohammed, are even clearer and more manifest; especially in the 11th and 12th chapters of Revelation. At the same time they are all prefaces and signs of the Advent of the "Day of God"; the arrival of the "Great Hour," and the Manifestation of the "Beauty of God," the "Behi-El-Abha."

O ye pious souls! Now that ye have understood the manner of the propagation of the former religions and in what measure these four proofs can be used by their adherents, know ye (may God pour upon you a light from His Kingdom the El-Abha!), that the aforementioned proofs demonstrate this most holy and Supreme Manifestation, in a far clearer and more perfect way than is the case with other religions. Therefore should any one of the

followers of the former prophets deny this one, it would be absolutely impossible for him to prove the truth of his own religion; to which fact we have made reference in former demonstrations.

We must now speak of each one of the aforesaid proofs in connection with this Most Great Manifestation, just as we have spoken of them in connection with other religions,—so that the superior significance of their application to Him, may be clearly realized by every man of faith.

As to the Divine Book, namely, the Heavenly Revelation. Verily, our Lord the ABHA, notwithstanding that He was subject during the days of His Manifestation, to all kinds of physical calamities, afflictions, and great tribulations, which we will not now enlarge upon; although He was not a man of learning nor a student of any university; yet his Holy Tablets, both Persian and Arabic, are spread throughout all regions, and it is no exaggeration to say that they exceed in quantity the Heavenly Books and Divine Writings possessed by all the different nations of the earth. They embody the solutions of the intricacies of the prophetic Books, interpretations of the Words of the Chosen Ones, and contain answers to the abstruse questions of the leading philosophers and doctors, which knowledge was sealed and closed up by the prophets of bygone cycles, so that the minds of the wisest men of every century were unable to comprehend it.

His Holy Tablets contain laws, ordinances, regulations and ethical teachings whereby the character

of the most barbarous peoples are reformed, the rights of all nations can be preserved, and upon which all the world can agree.

They contain discourses upon the subtle meanings of Divine Unity, the mode of the Manifestation of Prophets, the station and mission of the Chosen Ones, and praises of the Glorious God. They contain prayers, invocations, supplications, communes, directions to be humble toward God and submissive in His Presence; all of which call forth compassion, soften the character, and create that fear of God, that solid foundation, upon which the Wisdom proceeding from the Spirit of Assurance and firm faith, is based. To this, God has made reference, thus:—"Adore thy Lord, that positive Realization may come to thee."

During His blessed Days, four rivers flowed forth from His Supreme Pen and sweet Utterances, containing such Divine and Exalted Knowledge, such lofty, heavenly Wisdom, that hearts are quickened, souls rejoiced, the dead are raised, and breasts dilated. These are the same four rivers flowing from the Throne of God in the exalted Paradise; the fountains pouring out the Water of Life from the Supreme Concourse, spoken of by the Guardians of Revelation. Also it is said by God through the tongue of Moses:—"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass."

As to the excellent "Branch extended from the Ancient Root," the Light risen from the Heaven

of the Will of our Lord the Clement, the Merciful; the pen of a fluent writer fails to describe His Holy Tablets and Utterances or the nature of His marvellous character and qualities. There are thousands of His Tablets spread in all parts, as blossoms scattered from the trees in spring time. Like fragrance wafted by the breeze of dawn, does His fluent Pen diffuse life in all cities. When in 1894 A. D., the author travelled to the Holy Land, and through the assistance of the Divine Favors, attained unto the visit of His Holy Threshold, he was amazed to behold in Him all virtues and perfections. These were witnessed during ten months residence in the shelter of His nearness. Many a time we were in His holy Presence, when multitudes of prominent people were there, such as judges, doctors, and great military and civil officials of different nationality, religion, and language. While He was in their midst, large packages of letters from all parts and countries of the world were brought to Him. Although encompassed with insurmountable difficulties, He (Glorified is His Name and Grandeur!) continued to answer questions and requests made by those present, while He wrote replies to each letter. These Tablets and replies were written without meditation, pause of pen, or preliminary rough-copy, and without the help of a scribe. All regions are filled with His Tablets and hearts are attracted through their spread. He has caused the Voice of His Lord the El-Abha, to reach the high heavens. Through the words of His widespread epistles which exhale

the purest fragrances of His Utterances, souls are uplifted; and from their verses, the fountains of knowledge and wisdom flow onward.

As to the "First Point," the Supreme Model, the Precursor of the Beauty of our Lord, the Behi-Ul-Abha (Glorified is His Name!): He was born of one of the noblest households and most holy families, and engaged in trade with His maternal uncle, who was an example of virtue and sanctity. When twenty-five years old, through the permission of His Lord the El-Abha, He declared His mission in Mecca, amidst a great congregation, at which announcement, all quarters of the world trembled, and the pillars of the earth quaked. Thence He returned to the city of Bushire situated on the coast of the Persian Gulf; His face shining and gleaming as the moon in mid-heaven. On His arrival thither, He remained in His uncle's house; then, after a few days, He left for Shiraz. On the road, He was overtaken and captured by a squad of cavalry sent by the Government. The days of His mission lasted for almost seven years, all of which He passed in banishment and imprisonment, either in His own house or in the quarters of the Government. Finally, He was exiled to Azerbaijan, Persia; and in Tabriz, the principal city of that province, He suffered martyrdom and ascended to the shelter of God. During these long afflictions, He revealed volumes of verses, discourses, communes, and scientific treatises, both in Persian and Arabic, which astounded men of learning, and silenced disputing doctors and philosophers. He

wrote His Holy Tablets without premeditation. He challenged men of learning, openly demanding of them to produce even one similar verse. Most of them, He wrote in the presence of the king, princes, and prominent men of learning and literature. At the same time, His blessed life was at the mercy of His strongest antagonists, and subject to the word of the most unjust, hard-hearted, ignorant religious doctors.

Yet they could not find any ground of objection to His verses, except that they contained things contrary to grammatical rules, which, they said, destroyed their eloquence and fluency. He silenced them by showing similar examples revealed in the Koran. We have completely discussed this point in detail, in our book "Fara'-yed."

But all their argument served only to prove that His exalted Word became effective and prevalent solely through the Power of God and His Heavenly Will; and not through material and human means, such as scholastic learning and rhetorical eloquence. By the Life of God, nothing baffles or silences the sceptic, except the fact that in spite of every difficulty, doubt and obstacle, the Word of God prevails.

God the Almighty sent Mohammed with the verses of the Koran, containing every beauty of style; and it was said:—"Verily, Mohammed deludes people by the charm of his speech and by adorning the words of his Koran." Then He sent the "First Point" with the verses of The Beyan and simplicity of explanation; and it was said that the

Bab's words were vernacular and ungrammatical. How can God the Almighty deal with these contradictory opinions and inconsistent objections, except to do "whatsoever He willeth and command whatsoever He desireth?" Thus He abandons these sceptics to bewilder themselves in their doubts and indulge in their objections. Concerning the Tablets of our Lord the Master, Abdul-Beha, the Glory of all in the Kingdom of Names; notwithstanding their beauty of explanation and the grace of their style, which is acknowledged by every eloquent man and fluent writer, the most astonishing objection was made by the center of Violation, the leader of the Nakazeen, who said:—"As his words contain no grammatical errors, they do not resemble Divine Words." What was said by our Lord Jesus Christ, is fulfilled in them (Matt., ch. xi., vs. 16 to 19):—"But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children." Let us leave the deniers to wander in the abyss of imagination, and return to our subject.

As to the Logical Argument, that is the prevalence of His Word, and the promotion of His

Cause, without the assistance of any human means, but only through the Divine Will and heavenly evidences; this point is too clear to need any further explanation and demonstration. Notwithstanding that the progress of His Holy Word was prevented by the power of tyranny with all manners of prohibition, yet in less than one quarter of a century, His Manifestation and Cause penetrated all religions and peoples, affecting most of the creeds and sects. By its power, numerous souls among Moslems, Christians, Zoroastrians, Nusseyrites and Jews have come to believe in His teachings; their morals have been reformed, their tastes purified, their learning expanded, their manners beautified, and the Spirit of Faith and the Breath of Assurance have filled their hearts. In time of tribulation they have preferred to die rather than abandon their faith, surrendering their lives in the path of their Beloved with the utmost delight. During afflictions their faces beamed with the joy of sacrifice, and while in the clutches of the enemy, they sang melodies of thanks and glorification. It is very rare to find one of the people of Beha who is not willing in heart to suffer martyrdom for the sake of God; or one firm in the "Covenant of Him around whom all Names revolve," who is not rejoiced in Spirit to sacrifice himself for promoting the Word of God. This is a sign of the most complete realization and perfect faith. This is a confirmatory and real testimony of the Word of the Manifestation of the Cause of God, the Lord of the Creatures.

The attitude of the Hebrew and Zoroastrian peoples is most amazing; for as is known to the men of understanding, enmity toward Christ and Mohammed was from time of old, inborn in their hearts, and their whole being was filled with hatred for these two manifest lights, to such an extent that none of the leaders of these two religions could convert even one Jew or Zoroastrian, except by force and compulsion. But the people of Beha have converted thousands of them through their clear arguments, whereby their souls are illumined, their eyes are opened, their morals reformed, their characters renewed, their hatred changed into love, their discord into harmony, their infidelity into faith, and their hostility into obedience and loyalty. These converts have even directed other peoples and religions, to the fountain of truth, and thus the words of God are fulfilled in them:—"And we were minded to be gracious unto those who were weakened in the land, and to make them leaders of religion and to make them the heirs (of the Kingdom and the holy Land)."

Likewise, the words of Zechariah were fulfilled, as written in ch. viii., v. 23:—"Thus saith the Lord of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you."

The words of Christ are also fulfilled in them (Rev., ch. vii., v. 4):—"And I heard the number of

them which were sealed: And there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the Children of Israel."

As to Miracles and Wonders: As the time of this Manifestation is recent, it is possible for every seeker to investigate the sources of these wonders and the character of their narrators. Thus the truthful may be recognized among them, and those whose words can be relied upon. Therefore these acts and wonders are nearer to acceptance than the miracles of the former prophets, the sources of which cannot be investigated, nor their narrators examined. Almost all those who have been in the presence of our Lord the El-Abha, and whose good character and deeds testify to their purity of heart; those whose words can be trusted, have witnessed His manifest miracles and clear signs. Even numbers of people who are outside of His Religion, have given testimony of His Miracles, which evidences we have written in our book "Feráyed." This fact is one of the characteristics of this most luminous and glorious Manifestation, the power by which it transcends all former Manifestations. The author can testify, and God the Exalted bears witness to the truth of the circumstances in connection with the oppression of Abdul-Aziz, Sultan of Turkey, and the events which followed it. The late Zabih (Haji Mohammed Ismael, who suffered martyrdom in Persia) informed the author of their full particulars, in 1293 A. H. (1876 A. D.), and read unto him, the Tablet of Ráis and the Tablet of K.Z.

(an abbreviation of the name of Sheikh Kazem of Kazwin, entitled Samandar, an old faithful Behai merchant and prominent teacher still living in Kazwin, Persia). Thus we possessed information of them nearly seven months before their occurrence. At that time we were in our father's religion, and could not believe that the events spoken of in those Tablets would come to pass. Yet his honor Aga-Abdul-Karim, of Isfahan, our teacher of the Truth, guaranteed it, and finally they were completely fulfilled.

Still clearer are the prophecies he has made in His Tablets concerning future events, which prophecies he calls "evidences"; of the fulfillment of which the world will be informed, and the sleepers will be cognizant thereof, after their appearance.

Some of the events which occurred in the days of our Lord the El-Abha (Glorified is His Name!), deserve to be noticed by the men of perception. Very often meetings were held by the men of learning and by members of the Government, at which prominent people discussed how to resist the effectiveness of the Word of God, as revealed in Our Lord; and demanded public miracles. Finally, they concluded to resort to violence and persecution, as is the established custom of tyrants.

One of these events occurred in 1882 A. D. (1300 A. H.), when a number of Behaïs were arrested without cause or reason, through the instigation of doctors of religion. This oppression was by the command of the prince Kamran-Mirza,

the third son of the late Nasser-eddin-Shah, then entitled Nayeb-El-Saltaneh (Prince Regent), Governor of Teheran. Some of the Behaïs were arrested in the city of Rasht, the principal town of Guilan, Persia, and others were taken in Isfahan and Hamadan. This stirred all parts of Persia, and persecutions prevailed throughout all cities. The doctors of religion and the rulers availed themselves of this opportunity to plunder the property of the people of faith. By this, they showed forth the hatred which they bore, as well as their inability to resist the people of Beha with proofs and arguments. Among those arrested and imprisoned in Teheran was Mirza-Mohammed-Reza of Mohammed-Abad (well-known as Yazdi), a gray-bearded man of seventy, lion-hearted and noted for steadfastness. He (may the Mercy of God be upon him!) was a symbol of piety, sanctity, truthfulness and steadfastness in the Cause of God. Even the most violent of his enemies have confessed his virtues, and his brilliant character raised sympathy in the hardest hearts of his persecutors.

In those days meetings for discussion with the believers of God were held in the house of the above-mentioned prince. The purpose of these meetings was to silence and confute the Behaïs, and not for inquiry or investigation. They used the most evil kinds of execration, which constitutes the only armor of an ignorant man when discomfited, and supplies a sword to the debased and wicked. Their habit in

controversy was to first uphold their own theological doctrines, which assert that the Mahdi who will arise in the Cause of God, shall not be permitted to contradict any of their beliefs, or to change any of their rites and customs. This implies that they, and not God, send the Forerunner of the Cause of God, and cause the "Spirit of God" to descend. Thus they have ordained fixed laws and regulations, and have traced a certain path for God's messenger before His appearance, without allowing that any change or departure could be made therefrom. And this is characteristic of each religious sect, notwithstanding the divergence and difference between their beliefs, customs and creeds. In such a case, how could the Mahdi satisfy the different communities and peoples? Must he comply with the wishes of the Sunnites, who insist that He should conform to the law of Hanafieh, or with the desires of the Shi-ites who require him to follow the theory of the Imamat? God is far exalted above what the unjust men say!

To be brief. While the believers put them to silence in this arena, by arguments, texts of the Koran and the traditions, they still clung to miracles; temptingly demanding signs. These insolent and ease-loving individuals did not even take the pains to present themselves before the Manifestation of God, as did the former nations; but, while remaining in their own home and country, each one demanded whatever happened to be dictated by his own imaginations, thoughts, views and desires.

The believers answered them, that verily, miracles are of no value in similar cases, nor do they give the benefit of assurance and conviction to the seeker; and that the only cause of the ruin of former nations was in demanding miracles from their prophets, and tempting their messengers through their groundless requests. They said, if you deem it necessary, agree together in demanding a certain sign upon an appointed day; announce to the people of Teheran what you have decided upon; then ask it from the Day-spring of the lights of God, the Behi-El Abha. He will show forth unto you that great sign. For it is not reasonable that the Manifestations of the Command of God should grant all the individual wishes and whims of the seekers of wonders. Even people who are not seeking after religion or the understanding of truth, would continually demand miracles for their own amusement and delight; and thus the assemblies of the prophets and messengers, the abodes of wisdom and guidance, would be changed into gatherings for amusement and jugglery. Thus it was said by God:—"If the truth had followed their desires, verily, the heavens and the earth had been corrupted"; that is, the peoples and religions would have been corrupted. Here the exalted Lord hath interpreted the word "heaven" to be the heaven of religion, and "earth" to be the hearts of the faithful. It is spoken of as the "earth of Knowledge and Assurance" in the Book of "Ighan."

While the author was imprisoned in the house of the prince Nayeb-Essaltanah (the late Shah's third son, then Governor of Teheran), we were, one day, summoned into his presence. When seated before him, while a number of princes and generals stood by, he addressed us, saying:—

“O Abul-Fazl, verily, Mirza-Mohammed-Reza says that we may demand by a telegram, any miracle that we may decide upon, from Beha-Ullah, and that He will undoubtedly manifest through His Divine Power, the miracle we seek for, in response to our request. He further says, that if Beha-Ullah did not show forth the miracle we ask,—which supposition is impossible,—then he (Reza) would himself denounce Him in all the Moslem countries. By this statement he has shown his great belief and trust in the Founder of His Faith.” Then we answered:—“Mirza-Mohammed-Reza must needs be very certain of the appearance of the miracle which he has so seriously promised you without doubt or hesitation. He is known by you to be very fearless, sincere and steadfast in this Cause.” Then the Governor questioned us saying:—“What is your opinion as to whether we should demand the miracle or abandon the idea?” We answered:—“What is the cause of your hesitation and the reason of your delay in demanding a miracle and concluding the matter? We have frequently heard you saying, that if Beha-Ullah is the very Manifestation of the Lord, promised in the Koran, why does He not show us a miracle?

Here are the people of Beha, ready to answer your demand and enable you to attain your aim. Verily they have declared the proof unto you and propounded the evidence for you, while you are heedless of the evil result which might follow. Should you not look into this matter with the eye of a just investigator and not as a contentious oppressor? Then your name may be spoken of with respect during future times, and that which befell the former nations, may not happen unto you! Know, O prince, verily suppression, prohibition, imprisonment, murder, and similar persecutions will not prevent the propagation of this Cause. People will not submit to kings in matters of religion, nor will they, for the sake of their nobles and princes, turn away from the one whom they have followed as the means of their salvation. Nay, rather, were you to behold with a discerning eye, you would find that hindrance and restriction tend but to increase man's search after the Truth and his belief in it. The murder and imprisonment of believers but adds to the credit and respect of the Cause, in the sight of men of perception. By the Life of God, man does not despise that for which he has spent gold and property; then how can he abandon that for which souls and lives are sacrificed, and for the sake of which the severest calamities and afflictions are accounted a delight? Has not forty years' experience been sufficient to make known unto you these evident facts? Therefore you should not forsake your own judgment at the instigation of ignorant doc-

tors of religion, who are known to be the most violent enemies of your government, and the most bitter antagonists of your rule? You should consider these things if your purpose is to protect the people from being led astray in regard to religion, although 'you have not been sent as guardian unto them.' And if you intend to guard your government and preserve your dominion, by God, I do not see any ground for fearing this movement. The great Lord Beha-Ullah has commanded His followers to love all nations, to have respect for philosophers and learned men, to forsake strife with any sect and creed, to bear allegiance to kings and princes, to obey the laws of the Government, and not to interfere with political affairs. By a prohibition which cannot be doubted, changed or otherwise interpreted, He has strictly forbidden conflict, quarrel, and all that may create hatred and animosity in souls and hearts, such as contention for glory and honor; so that nothing contrary to humanity or to the preservation of society may arise."

"Consequently, you find the people of Beha enduring every injustice and humiliation, every abasement and persecution, without sigh, complaint, or deviation from the highway of obedience and loyalty. But this is not from cowardice, fear or baseness, for you have witnessed their great fortitude, dumb endurance, and great patience under persecutions; you know well their firmness of heart under the attack of enemies. Nay, rather, all this is in compliance with the Com-

mand of their Lord the El-Abha, and for the purpose of attaining true human virtues, which are the only means for the reformation of the world."

"O great prince, it is not an ordinary thing for governments to find subjects who regard allegiance to the commands of their empire as religious duty; who practice obedience to the laws of government as a Divine Commandment. If you judge with fairness, you will acknowledge that this is the greatest Bounty of God which has yet appeared for the amelioration of the world; the highest heavenly Gift which has descended for the removal of the rancour concealed in the hearts of peoples."

To be brief. We discoursed concerning the demand for miracles and upon other subjects which deserved consideration, giving him every possible proof, and sincerely admonishing him. But he was surrounded with hostile suggestions of the religious doctors and the plots of the ignorant, so that nothing affected his opinion. So they assembled together and consulted how to suppress and eradicate the people of Beha, who, whether in joy or sorrow, only wished them good in return and who, in all circumstances, endeavored to lead them to honor and felicity. But God frustrated their evil plans and exertions, dispersed their meetings, scattered their gatherings, and their histories and records remain in the books and writings, as warnings to men of discernment and perception.

More wonderful and important than that which has already been mentioned, is the event which oc-

curred in Irak-Arabi, when the city of Baghdad was illuminated by the lights of the "Orb of the Universe." The pith of this event is that when the sun of the face of El-Beha shone forth from the horizon of the "Abode of Peace" (Baghdad), and His brilliant lights overcame the obscurity of the dense clouds which prevailed in the Cause of the "First Point," dispelling the darkness; then the Cause of God scintillated with lights, the scattered believers of God were brought together, and the penetration and effectiveness of the Word of God increased. This provoked the hatred and animosity of the Shi'ite doctors, who have great influence and are regarded of high importance in Irak, because the sanctuaries and tombs of the Imams are situated there. To these shrines the pilgrims of the Shi-ite "Church of the twelve" travel from all countries.

In those days, Sheik-Abdul-Hussein of Teheran, the Mujtahid, resided at Irak. As he was feared for his ingrained folly, pride, rashness, and proneness to revolt, the Persian Government had removed him thither, under the pretence of giving him a special appointment at the holy Sanctuaries. This appointment secured for him among the doctors, a kind of leadership, and gave him an absolute power and influence over people in general. When this Sheik saw the prevalence of the light of the Cause and Divine Word, he deliberately determined to resist the Word of God by force, eradicate the Behaïs, and to shed the blood of a considerable number of them by exciting a revolt. He

called a meeting of prominent Shi-ites, who discussed plans among themselves, and agreed to summon in council in the city of Kazemi-yeh (within 3 miles' distance from Baghdad), a large number of the doctors of Karbela and Najef, and the leading Shi-ites who resided in these places. The Persian Consul who then lived at Baghdad, was in accord with them. They also invited the great Divine Sheik-Mortaza-El-Ansari, a lofty personage, who was universally accepted by all the Shi-ites both in the East and West for his knowledge and piety. He was the chief among the Persian doctors of religion (may God cause the clouds of mercy and forgiveness to shower upon him!). But these plotters invited him nominally to a feast and concealed from him the real purpose of this council; for he was quite free from revolutionary plans, and entirely given to acts of devotion and to scientific lectures. He had rigorously abstained from listening to any complaint or evil word against the Babi community, believing that this subject (Behaism) pertained to the fundamental facts of religion, in which God has not allowed His servants to follow the opinion of others, or to rest upon theological decisions. Nay, rather, he reasoned, God has rebuked and rejected those who follow the opinion of their fathers, leaders, kings and divines, and has given a perfect freedom to every individual to investigate these facts himself with his own eyes, apprehending them through his own effort and exertion. Thus God has promised them guidance as a fruit of this exertion, and has

clearly stated that they shall attain the Truth. Far be it from Him to break His promise !

These doctors knew this to be his opinion in theology, but they imagined that when he entered into their assembly and saw their number and unanimous agreement, he would also conform and be in one accord with them.

The appointed day came ; the doctors and prominent men assembled together in the city of Kaze-mi-yeh, and people gathered around them from every quarter. Then arose the headstrong Sheik-Abdul-Hussein who, in the course of an address, divulged the purpose of their assembly, and laid bare unto them his plan for suppressing the Babis.

When the late Sheik-Mortaza-El-Ansari heard his speech and understood this object, he instantly arose and went out from among them. No matter how they insisted upon his remaining, showed the necessity of his presence, and tried to persuade him to agree with them, he would not assent, but persisted in leaving them. He did not even stop in that city, but immediately departed to the City of Najef, where the tomb of Ali is located, and which was his headquarters for religious lectures. When he left, the members of the assembly were confused, and their plans changed, yet because of their high rank and great number, they were not diverted from putting their plans into practice. By vote, they resolved to send a representative to the holy presence of Beha-Ullah, inquiring about His aim and the purpose of His Claim, as well as His proofs and Arguments. This mission was

entrusted to one of the doctors named Mollah-Hassan the Amoo, a prominent Persian divine, residing at Irak, who was greatly trusted by Sheik-Abdul-Hussein, and valued by him for his eloquence, judgment, constancy and firmness. When this delegate arrived at Baghdad, he attained the honor of entering into the presence of the Most Holy Abha, through the intercession of one of the Persian nobility who was there at that time. He delivered the message of the doctors. Then the Tongue of Grandeur engaged in discourse and explanation, and the reins of Utterance were loosened in the arena of proof and argument. Then was demonstrated the truth of the mission of the "First Point," through explanations which quicken souls and spirits, attract hearts and minds, unveil the essential evidences and irrefutable proofs, and entirely destroy and remove the suspicions of the sceptic. Finally, Mollah-Hassan was requested to inform the doctors of what he had seen and heard concerning the signs of his Lord the El-Abha, and to ask them to present themselves before Him, so that He might make the Truth as clear to them as the sun in mid-heaven, and thus conclude the matter satisfactorily. When the delegate found in the Power of His proofs and the fullness of His explanation, that which was beyond his expectation, he was so overwhelmed with the waves of the sea of Beha-Ullah's Knowledge and Utterance, that he could not avoid acknowledging His Grandeur and Might, and submitting to the shining lights of His Argu-

ments. He bowed down in obedience, saying:—"Truly, it is impossible to demonstrate the truth of any other of the heavenly religions and Divine Matters, with such clearness, elucidation, and measure of proof and argument. The straight Highway path appeared clear as the sun, and the Morn of Truth hath risen as a bright dawn which follows a dark night. Yet the condition of the doctors and the criticism of the divines must be evident to the Presence of El-Abha. If they are not contented with scientific proofs and decisive arguments, is there any way to show them Divine miracles and heavenly Signs?"

By this, he meant to ask the Lord's permission to promise the doctors the appearance of a great sign, which might silence the ignorant and cut the ropes of the superstitious. The Lord of mankind gave him a direct answer, saying:—"Let the assembly of doctors agree together to demand a particular sign and a definite miracle from the holy Presence of El-Abha, so that God the Exalted, may manifest the required sign and miracle. Thus no ground will be left for doubt and denial; even as during former centuries, God hath dealt with the rebellious nations of the past."

When Mullah-Hassan the delegate heard this clear promise from the Tongue of Grandeur, he returned to Kazemeyeh with joy and gladness, supposing that he could thereby satisfy those exorbitant and unjust souls, and thus prevent the calamities which might result from that ominous and violent revolutionary meeting. When he met the

doctors and informed them of the perfect proofs, clear arguments and the promise finally given by Beha-Ullah concerning the showing forth of a decisive miracle, the violence of the insolent Sheik-Abdul-Hussein increased. He was frenzied with anger as he listened to the account of the promise of a sign. For the Sheik, because of his excessive pride, vanity, arrogance, and violent hostility toward the "First Point" and His followers, could not bear the sight of any of the Babis. How then could he be supposed to agree to a scientific debate and a demand for heavenly Signs? In truth, he was more afraid of being discomfited in the discussion and defeated in the field of controversy, than of the appearance of a great Sign at which heads would bow down, and whereby the light of the Sun of the Divine Word might become manifest throughout all regions. These are general characteristics inherent in the doctors of every religion, because their natures are cramped by the dryness of their theological faculty, and their thoughts confined to the narrow circle of scholastic learning. This inevitably results in melancholic excitement and desire for securing their religious leadership.

Finally, the opinions of that body of doctors differed; their plans were frustrated and their assembly scattered. When the Sheik found his meeting and council abortive, and that the only result was ill-success and failure, the flame of his enmity increased, and the tempest of his hostility became violent. He resolved to resort to political ma-

chines, in combination with those high Persian dignitaries and officials whose only occupation was the murder of the pious, pillage of the poor, and dispersion of the Persian subjects throughout all countries and regions. So the Sheik, excited and embittered by his disappointment, began to correspond with these princes and communicate with such as he knew to be antagonistic to the people of Beha. Thus arose wicked plans and cunning religious stratagems which were intended to spread dissension. But God the Exalted disclosed their schemings, ruined their efforts, defeated their hopes, quenched the fire of their revolts, and cut off their root. Naught remains but their histories which express the folly of their dreams, their lack of understanding, and the inefficiency of their deeds. These monuments of wickedness remain as a subject for meditation and a warning to such as are willing to be admonished.

A fact more evident and important than all the great events spoken of, and one which demonstrates the perfectness of the proofs of our Lord the Abha, is the "Epistle to the King," revealed in the Kitabel-Hykl, from the Pen of the Merciful, to the Shah of Persia. This Tablet was sent to him in 1869 A. D. (1286 A. H.), when he was in the neighborhood of Teheran. The bearer was a youth named Badi, who astonished the world by the power of his faith, his great devotion, constancy, and wonderful endurance in suffering the bitterest kind of death, with all joy, and steadfastness. The hard-hearted executioners, for three

successive days, branded him all over the body with red-hot irons, until his flesh was severed from his bones, and every limb was out of joint. Yet he did not grieve or show the least evidence of flinching, nor during the continuance of this frightful ordeal, did he display the slightest symptom of distress or plead for mercy.

So he breathed his last; his marvellous life ended, and his strong, heroic soul ascended to the courts of the Exalted Friend; to the Outlook of El-Abha, where with brilliant and cheerful face, the lights of his glorification beam forth as the sun in mid-day.

In that excellent Epistle, Beha-Ullah gave full explanations, and expounded proofs concerning the truth of His Mission, as far as an epistle could contain; and these He expressed with the utmost grace of speech and elegance of style. He explained how the morals of the Babis were changed, and how their deeds and disposition had been reformed through His appearance among them in Baghdad; how they were thus enabled to patiently endure the bitter afflictions and violent calamities which were unceasingly pouring upon them through the fanaticism of the clergy and the caprice of rulers; how during that long period, they had committed no act which might disturb the Government or trouble the thoughts of statesmen. In this explicit Tablet, He demonstrated to them, by clear arguments and decisive statements, that the purpose of the mission of a Manifestation of the Cause of God is not to seek after dominion

or attain lofty temporal power. This is the favorite argument of accusation against the Behāis by the ignorant Shi-ites. He proved that political dominion has been conferred by God upon kings and rulers, and that no Behāi is allowed to infringe upon their regulations, contradict their opinions, interfere with their political management, or stir up sedition in their empire. He also clearly explained that the appearance of the Manifestation of God was in connection with religious affairs and spiritual matters, for the purpose of reforming morals, sanctifying souls, beautifying actions, and illuminating hearts. This was the mission for which they were promised in the Heavenly Books; and that function has no relation with political matters.

To resume. This Epistle contained things revealed by His Supreme Pen, whereby the Persian statesmen could attain everlasting glory, had they been endowed with sagacity and discernment. Soon will their posterity lament over their negligence!

At the end of the Epistle, the Lord El-Abha asked the Shah to arrange that the Persian doctors should meet Him in the Shah's presence, in order to discuss the proofs of the truth of this Cause; that they might ask an explanation of all that lies hidden in their minds and hearts; so that the Truth might be distinguished from falsehood, and the pathway of Guidance from that of error. Then He placed the final decision in the Shah's hands. By this, His purpose was not to seek help or assist-

ance from the Shah, but to publicly show forth the Truth, and make clear its distinction from falsehood, as a proof and accomplishment of His Mission. For God the Almighty, is alone sufficient to assist His Manifestation and help His Messenger. Verily, He is independent from all the world, and in His hand are the hosts of heaven and earth! Were the just to judge with fairness, they would acknowledge that in bygone ages, no similar event has ever occurred in the Appearance of the Manifestations of God, nor has the like of it been witnessed in past centuries. For the sake of brevity, we will not treat of the events and results which followed the "Epistle to the King," all of which are matters of history. We now return to our discussion upon religious arguments, whereby the truth of the Manifestation of El-Abha can be demonstrated.

As to the prophecies, that is the predictions revealed in the Holy Scriptures: Know ye (may God illumine your faces, brighten your hearts, strengthen your limbs, and dilate your breasts!) that it was ordained in the Knowledge of God and His Great Wisdom to accomplish the amelioration of the conditions of the world and the unification of nations. Know ye, likewise, that former conditions should be changed; the ages darkened by clouds of division and discord should be ended through the Manifestation of His Glorious Face and the Advent of His Great Day. Therefore He prophesied to all countries and regions the Hour of His Coming, and made the Covenant of His Ap-

pearance with all creeds and communities, through the tongues of the prophets. For there is no founder or institutor of a religion who has not made the acceptance of the Faith inseparable from belief in the "latter day," and who has not strictly commanded his adherents to await the "final salvation" of that great and important time. No cycle has passed without the appearance of a Heavenly Man, firmly proclaiming and loudly heralding the advent of the "Great Hour," the inevitable coming of the great day of Resurrection, the rising of the Supreme Lord and the Manifestation of the Beauty of God, the Behi-El-Abha. Thus the glad tidings of that Manifestation have reached the high heavens, have spread throughout all regions, and filled all prophetic writings and books. Consequently, we find the adherents of every one of the seven extant religions of the earth, awaiting the coming of the great "hour," and believing firmly in the advent of the great "Resurrection." We find also that in the Book which they recognize to be a divine and heavenly Revelation, all the signs, tokens, events and occurrences of that Day are recorded in full particulars. These particulars specify the country and place where its lights shall rise, the time of its realization and the date of its appearance. This fact is clear to those who study these Books, look into their prophecies and consider the principal purposes of the references made therein. By the Life of God, were the possessors of mature minds to look into the pages of the Holy Scriptures, they would find nothing but a collection

of songs uttered by the tongues of the prophets in glorification of their Lord the El-Abha; melodies sung by the birds of Holiness announcing His coming and Appearance in the great Day of Resurrection. To this we have called attention in our former treatises, and will speak of them in our future interpretations, God willing.

The Fifth Introduction.

Treating of the Causes which Led People to Deny the Manifestations of God in the Days of their Appearance.

O ye people of Beha, who have taken hold of a "Strong Handle which shall not be broken," as ye have been promised by our Lord the El-Abha! Now that ye understand the proofs and arguments which demonstrate the truth of the Manifestations of the Command of God in general, and especially are illumined by the perfect proof of this holy Cause, know ye (may God illumine your inward sight, cause you to devote your wishes and hopes to the service of all the world, and irradiate your hearts and minds with the light of pure love for humanity!), that although the Manifestations of God were endowed with clear evidences and arguments; although they manifested great power and were distinguished from ordinary people in their character and deeds, yet we find that people denied them in the days of their appearance, and even their own kindred and race contradicted them. These people sacrificed their property in order to antagonize the Manifestations; endured afflictions and calamities in contradicting them; fabricated lies and calumnies to injure them; strove to make the hearts of people hate them; and availed themselves of every artifice to raise the wrath of the ignorant against them. All this opposition, contradiction

and obstinacy resulted from the doubts which had imbued their minds, obscured their insight, blinded their hearts and darkened their reason. Thus they supposed themselves right in this prejudice and opposition, without investigating or discussing the matter. It never occurred to them that they might be mistaken and led astray. Nay, rather, they were convinced that their views were sound, and so firmly did they trust in the correctness of their opinions when falsely denying the Messenger of God, that they prayed God, saying:—"O God, if this be the truth from Thee, rain down stones upon us from Heaven." For it is unreasonable to think that a sane man would endanger his safety and be hostile to himself by falsely denying a prophet, if he was convinced of the authenticity of that prophet's claim and the validity of His mission. This would be foolishly seeking his own destruction. How much more unreasonable then, would it be to believe that a great people could have acted thus during long periods. All this was therefore a result of the doubts which possessed their minds and prevented their eyes from seeing. The clearest proof of the effect of these doubts is that the Hebrew nation has continued for a period exceeding 1800 years, to preserve its own beliefs and falsely deny our Lord Jesus Christ. During this long period, the Jews have endured, both in the East and West, the most violent persecutions, such as death, execration, humiliation and degradation, without forsaking their false beliefs, or allying themselves with the Christian Church, except

through force, compulsion or other base means. During this time, not a day has passed without their stretching forth hands of supplication toward God the Exalted, begging Him with sighs and tears for the Manifestation of the Messiah, and beseeching the approach of the day of His advent. Is not this caused by their clinging to the doubts which were firmly imbedded in their hearts and minds? Unquestionably this is the effect of these doubts upon their beliefs and tendencies.

Know, O ye just ones! These above-mentioned doubts, which have darkened the regions of the earth with their dust, and the gloomy darkness of which has obscured the sight of nations, are not the same in every individual. Verily, a shrewd mind finds every contradictor possessing his own peculiar doubt or objection; an invention and fabrication of his imagination, whereby he rejects the Manifestation of the Command of God. Even great philosophers and writers of the present day have not refrained from opposing this Manifestation of God, on account of sins formerly committed by others against humanity; and by considering the wars and dissensions among different sects in former centuries, as decisive arguments against the Behaïs.* Such intelligent men may be likened to those who would propose to persecute and murder all children born in their days, simply because a

*An article appeared in the newspaper "The Caucasus" of Tiflis (Russia) 1893, in which its author gave a translation of the Tablet of "Ishrakat" revealed by Beha-Ullah, and praised the teachings of Beha-ism; but warned people against it. Because, he said, every religious movement had ended in strife and bloodshed; then citing Lutheranism and other examples.

great number of children who were formerly born, became murderers, thieves and brigands when they grew up. Or like unto those who would sanction the closing of schools and barring the way of education, because a great many students became heretics and innovators, after they advanced in knowledge and study. Truly, how evil and abortive is this philosophy, in its theory and conclusion!

It may be said that doubts are as numerous as the deniers, for they cannot be confined to a regular order. Verily, every contradictor when hearing the call of one who invites people unto God, endeavors to refute Him by clinging to a certain imaginary and individual suspicion or doubt, which has no connection with the real proof and argument. For the real proof and argument is the authoritative standard by which to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and to recognize a prophet. It is not that he should conform with the discordant desires and contradictory inclinations of individuals. Yet doubts may be, according to their nature, classified into four great divisions, each of which may be regarded by a man of wisdom and perception, as being a universal pestilence for the destruction of communities and peoples. Doubt is a prevalent sickness, attacking all religions and creeds.

The First Division comprises the doubts which come to a man because of his ignorance of the real proof and argument. For a real proof leads a seeker and investigator toward his aim, and is like unto a road by which a traveller reaches his destina-

tion. So a mistaken proof prevents a man apprehending the real fact, and is a wrong road which leads a traveller astray. Thus the science of logic and syllogism was founded, and rules for formulating correct conclusions were laid down, in order to protect men of perception as much as possible, from falling into error in reasoning. By this they are prevented from building upon false foundations, and taking as proofs, things which are not proofs, or as conclusions, things which are not conclusions.

We have previously pointed out that the Egyptians and Syrians who denied Moses; that the Jews and Romans who refused to acknowledge the truth of our Lord Christ (Glory be to Him!), were not influenced by personal enmity or selfish prejudices. That is to say, they did not recognize the truth of Christ and Moses, and at the same time deny them. These nations were not so foolish and distracted as to deliberately deny these Manifestations, and thereby expose themselves and their families to the anger and wrath of God. Nay, they rejected and opposed Christ and Moses on account of their conviction of the falsehood of their Mission and Word. This was a result of illogical reasoning, which prevented them from arriving at a sound conclusion, as we have mentioned above. For they took as proofs things which were not proofs, and accepted as arguments things which were not arguments. Thus they drew wrong conclusions. The door of mistaken proofs through which nations have entered into denial of the Day-springs of the Lights

of God, is very wide. We find that every nation, nay, rather, every individual has invented a particular doubt, through which the Manifestations of God have been denied. For instance, one rejects Moses because of His war and pillage; another rejects Mohammed on account of His marriage and polygamy, and because, like Moses, He has taken part in warfare and battles. The Hindoos and Brahmanians reject Moses, Jesus and Mohammed, because they allowed people to eat meat; esteeming slaughtering and eating animals as one of the most pernicious habits, and contrary to the principle and character of humanity. They believe that this habit hardens the heart, darkens the mind and conscience, leads men to commit abominable acts and become like the beasts themselves.

One reason the Jews gave for rejecting Christ, was His being a native of Galilee and Samaria; another was His eating and drinking. Their denial also resulted from the fact that some regarded such things as abstinence from war, celibacy, vegetarianism, a prophet's birthplace, and his eating and drinking, as proofs for distinguishing between the truth or falsehood of a Manifestation. These things could not be an indication of the validity of a mission inasmuch as there is no connection between the premises and conclusion.

What chiefly led nations into error, was their persistence in demanding miracles and asking intricate philosophical questions, in order to test the holy Manifestations and distinguish them from impostors. These two points have, since the founda-

tion of the world, been stretched as a snare before the intelligent men of learning, and laid as a pitfall into which great philosophers and wise men have plunged. For they consider it a necessity that the Manifestations of God should be able to do and know all things. They have imagined the demanding of wonders, and solving of abstruse questions to be the best means of knowing false prophets from true ones. Those who have considered themselves wise, deemed it proper to demand from one claiming a Divine Mission, absurd and impracticable inventions of their individual thoughts and imaginations, such as soaring in the air, causing trees to speak, drying up seas, changing day into night, transforming a rod into a serpent, quickening the dead, causing rocks to sing, mountains to dance, and other absurdities contrary to the laws of Nature. Even the most learned among them believed it right to test the prophets by abstruse philosophical points, which they thought concerned real facts. Such was the question they asked Christ concerning the meaning of resurrection (Matt. 22.). Similarly they questioned Mohammed about the "two-horned," the "crescent," and the "Spirit" (see the Koran); and asked the Bab concerning the rapidity or slowness of the revolution of the heavens. But these tempters never reflected whether the solving of such questions could have any connection with or could be proof of the validity of their missions. Had they pondered over this point, they would have been awakened to the fact that there is not the least

connection between such questions and the mission of a Prophet, nor could these things be a proof or argument of the truth of His Claim. Had they done so they would not have fallen into the deep pit of tempting the Lord, which action is prohibited in the Bible:—"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

As to the miracles: We have already pointed out when explaining the proofs and arguments, that these do not bear any primary indication of the truth of a prophetic claim. Likewise we have shown by clear and decisive argument, that there is no relation or connection between prophethood and the power of producing impossibilities. Therefore miracles are to be considered as secondary and auxiliary proofs, and not primary and real proofs.

To ask scientific questions as a test for distinguishing between the truth and falsehood of a Manifestation of God, is even more foolish than demanding miracles; for the purpose of philosophy and science is only to lead man toward the truth of things, and to the knowledge of causes, reasons and effects. It is an indisputable fact to the possessors of brilliant minds, that the unknown is constantly more than the known, and the latter, in comparison with the former, is as a drop compared to a vast sea. As it is said:—"Man is not accounted as learned except when he knows his own ignorance." Therefore, who can claim to know the realities and causes of all things, that he should presume to be able to test the knowledge of the

Manifestations of the All-Knowing God? Verily, the Prophets and the Manifestations of God are sent to make people of one accord, guide them to that which leads to their happiness and continuance, and cause them to relinquish that which may conduce to their ruin and destruction. These heavenly messengers are not sent as astronomers, mathematicians, philosophers, naturalists or historians. Should the prophets wish to dispute the philosophical views, historical opinions, and scientific theories of people, this would be contrary to their real mission, which is the guidance and unification of mankind. By this the meetings for religion and guidance would be changed into gatherings for scientific debate. Have not the theories of the Greek philosophers, ancient Chaldeans, the Arabs and Modern Persians proven false upon certain points, which they considered as indisputable facts? Such ideas as the limited dimensions of the Universe, the simplicity of the four elements, and similar ideas, which we do not treat of in this place, have been disproved and dismissed by modern science. Should the Prophets desire to dispute these points which were thought to be undeniable truths, would it not end in strife and wrangling? Would not the people use this as an excuse to deny and contradict them? Would not this make their mission abortive and useless? Mosheim has stated in his "Church History," that in the 8th Century, Boniface, the delegate of the Germans, persecuted the priest Virgilius, in Bavaria, for maintaining that the earth was spherical, and that, consequent-

ly, the other side of it was inhabited by people and illuminated by the sun and moon. Boniface looked upon this as a gross heresy. So he accused the man before the Pope, who actually excommunicated him as a heretic. Likewise, the story of the imprisonment of Galileo, the Italian, by command of the Pope, is known to all. When, in the 17th century, Galileo arose, affirmed the correctness of the Copernican theory, maintained that the sun is the center of our system, and that the earth revolves around it, his opinion was rejected by everybody. He was immediately arrested under the terrible Inquisition, imprisoned, and in danger of being burnt alive. During almost 18 centuries, philosophers and scholars, as well as the public, had held the Ptolemaic System of Astronomy. This theory which prevailed from the time of Ptolemy, who lectured in the College of Alexandria, about 130 years before Christ, and which continued down to the rise of Galileo, asserted that the earth was the center of the Universe, and that the sun and the other planets revolved around it.

The discussions* between Khosrow Perviz (a Persian King contemporary with Mohammed, and the son of Anoshirwan) and his favorite, Sapor, the philosopher,—which discussion is contained in the “five books” of Nezami Ganjawi, one of the great poets and philosophers of the 6th century of Islam,—concerned the Copernican and Ptolemaic systems.

*In this discussion, Khosrow held to the Copernican system, while the favorite upheld the Ptolemaic, thus refuting the King. Hence, even in those days, some existed who doubted the Ptolemaic and held to the Copernican system.

The people believed the Ptolemian theory to be a proven fact confirmed by the evidence of sciences; and any one who denied this, would be contradicted and considered insane. Even the "First Point" has not deemed it advisable to write anything upon this subject beyond the following statement contained in the "Holy Beyan":—

"Verily, astronomical facts are not as the doctors of our time have supposed them to be." For, at the time of the revelation of "the Beyan," the Copernican system was unknown to the Persians, and the theories of European men of learning had not been introduced into Persia.

From this explanation, it is clearly shown that we are not justified in relying upon scientific questions for proving the Divine Manifestations. For it is an indisputable fact that the world is in a state of progression, and progression means the advancement of learning and inventions, the increase of discovery, and expansion of the circle of knowledge. Therefore, during the progress of the world, many mistakes and errors of human opinion have been laid bare. Just as the mistaken theories of the ancient philosophers are brought to light, so also the errors of present philosophers will appear in their due time; in order that the meaning of progress may be realized, and the truth of origin and creation may become manifest. The vanity of the proofs demanded in former days from the Prophets, will appear, and the meaning of the following saying of Mohammed will be shown:—"We Prophets were sent to talk to the people according to the measure of their minds."

Verily, the Prophets, as already mentioned, notwithstanding their all-pervading Spirit, and their knowledge of that which was and will be, were sent and appointed for the spiritual guidance of people, and to bring them into accord. So they did not consider the people's learning and acquired knowledge, of importance, and left discoveries and inventions to their proper course of advancement in science and civilization.

It is now clearly proven that tempting the Manifestations of God by requiring signs and miracles, or asking them scientific questions, is the greatest pit into which nations have fallen. The fatal danger of their reliance upon false proofs and mistaken reasoning is therefore convincingly shown.

To this point, Paul the Apostle refers in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, ch. i., vs. 22, 23:—"For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom (philosophy): but we preach Christ crucified; unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greek foolishness." Also: Coloss., ch. ii., v. 8:—"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit."

When the Cause of Christ, after His Ascension to the Supreme Concourse, was spread by His disciples, the Jews considered themselves the heirs of the Prophets and the custodians of their writings and well-known miracles. They supposed that the best way by which to know the truth of Christ's Mission, was to test His disciples by the texts of Moses, Joshua, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and other Israelitish prophets. On the other hand,

the Greeks regarded themselves as being the heirs of great philosophers, the possessors of knowledge and learning, the discoverers of inventions and sciences. They imagined that the best means for understanding the truth of Christ's Mission was to test the upholders thereof, by scientific questions and philosophical theories which had been laid down by their great philosophers and leaders, such as Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Hippocrates, Socrates, and others, in whom they gloried and the fame of whose knowledge and wisdom is spread forever throughout the world. But that elect Apostle Paul sounded a warning, that what the Jews and Greeks demanded were as stumbling-blocks, foolishness and error. Paul taught that the greatest power and proof lay in the Divine Word received from the blessed Beauty of Christ, the truth of which was testified to by his steadfastness in enduring afflictions, and by the sacrifice of His pure Life for the salvation of the world.

Consider (may God assist you through the Spirit of intelligence!) how the Jews have suffered tribulations for 19 centuries. They will never be awakened and restored to their glory and honor except by acknowledging the truth of Christ under the banner of the covenant of our Lord El-Abha, and turning unto the Day-Spring of the Lights of His Testament.

As to the Greek philosophers, the falsity of their systems, and their errors in science and theology, have been shown since the 17th century, by the intellectual investigations of American and Euro-

pean men of learning. The 19th verse of the above-mentioned chapter refers to this fact: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent will I reject."

If with shrewd intelligences we look into the history of religions, we find that the old Pagan philosophy of Greece was the chief thing which deteriorated both Christianity and Islam. The Platonic philosophy created monkhood in Christianity and resulted in the corrupt practices of Sufism in Islam. This philosophy gave rise to certain classes of monks who afflicted Europe with great disasters during many centuries. The Aristotelian philosophy resulted in agnostic beliefs, which, during every century, armed thousands of men in combat against the Divine Religions, and denial of every heavenly law.

There are also many other calamities which we have not mentioned; all of them proceeding from mistaking the way, and from wrong methods of reasoning.

Verily, God is the Protector of all things!

The Second Division is that which refers to the subject of "Return." The adherents of every one of the extant religions believe in and expect the return of a definite person or persons, for the spread of their religion and the continuance of their law. Thus the Christians are awaiting the return of our Lord Christ (Glory be to Him!), faithfully believing that He will, without doubt, descend from heaven. The Jews expect the appearance of Elias the Prophet, before the Manifes-

tation of the Promised Lord and His rise in the appointed day. Likewise, among the Moslem nations, the Sunnites believe in the descent of Jesus Christ subsequent to the appearance of the Mahdi (Precursor); and the Shi-ites, followers of "the Church of the twelve," hold primarily the return of the Mahdi. This Mahdi they believe to be Mohammed, the son of Hassan-El-Askari, who disappeared in the year 260 A. H., and who was the twelfth of the Imams of Mohammed's household. Secondly, they believe that after the appearance of the Mahdi, the martyred Hussein, son of Ali the third Imam, will return. This return they speak of as the "Husseynite Manifestation." As to the Zoroastrians; they await the return of the famous Persian King of the dynasty of Keyan, erroneously interpreted by some of the European historians to be Cyrus. He, they believe, will return during the days of the promised Manifestation whom they look for at the "end of the time," and who will come from Persia to raise the dead and unify religions. They also await the return of certain others, whose names, and the manner of their coming we do not mention, for lack of space. This expectation of a return is found generally in all the other religions and creeds, as is known to every student of religious systems. This brief account shows that the "Return" of their Prophets is one of the important subjects in which the followers of religions are entangled, and by reason of which they have falsely denied and turned away from the Manifestations of the Command of God, during all ages.

In the 8th century of Islam, the well-known historian, Ebn-Kaldoon Magreli arose and denied that the Mahdi would appear. This he set forth in his great work, and some of the possessors of weak minds and darkened consciences followed his opinion, so that through them there was fulfilled that which was prophesied by the Imams in the following tradition:—

“Verily, the Mahdi shall rise at the time of disappointment and despair.” That is, when heedless souls have given up hope of his appearance, and deny the prophecies in connection with his rise, and have despaired of the coming of the one who is to save them from the day of calamities and afflictions, He will appear.

Similarly, a large number among the Christians denied the return of Christ in the flesh, and transposed the clear prophecies given concerning His Coming and Manifestation. They interpreted them to mean the prevalence of His religion and of His followers; which interpretation by no means conforms with the said prophecies. Thus what was said by the elect Apostle Peter, was fulfilled in them (II. Epistle, ch. ii., vs. 1, 2:—“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of”; and so on till the end of the chapter. But we ask the men of

perception to reflect upon and look deeply into the contents of this chapter. Verily, that elect Apostle has foreshadowed with clearest explanation and most eloquent style, all similar events which occurred in Christianity during the last few centuries. These prophecies he uttered in detail, and this very fact proves a pure and sacred spirit in him; comprehension and cognizance of future events in their full particulars.

When a people hold as an established fact that, in spite of spiritual prophecies, Christ shall not come from heaven; and when this idea becomes a general and approved belief, they will of necessity deny Him in His Manifestation, and speak evil of His way. Thus there will be fulfilled in them that which was said by the great Apostle:—"Even denying the Lord that bought them . . . by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." This was fully realized in this most brilliant age of El-Abba, and the truth of this prophecy is now perfectly evident.

Likewise, it is said in the same Epistle (ch. iii., v. 34):—"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation"; so on till the end of the chapter. This passage is a proof of the above-mentioned fact; that a great number would deny the coming of our Lord Christ (Glory be to Him!). Therefore it is not surprising that many people deny His coming

and misinterpret prophecies which clearly point to His Advent. This whole chapter also contains jewels of lofty and hidden meanings; which, God willing, we will clearly interpret in the proper place.

What is necessary to be noticed is, that just as the false argument of those who deny the coming of Christ in the flesh, caused doubts in beclouded hearts, on the other hand it created an equal amount of knowledge and faith in pure hearts, and steadfastness in chaste souls. For there is no stronger and clearer argument to prove the authenticity of the source of these prophecies, and their essential purport,—which is the descent of the Spirit of God (Christ) in the body of man,—than their fulfillment after the lapse of centuries and cycles. The prophecies of that elect apostle were made at a time in which the Christians had not yet any congregation or society to render them worthy of description by the writers and historians. Yet as they concerned events which have occurred and are fulfilled after the lapse of nineteen centuries, we have absolute and strongest proof that they were heavenly prophecies and predictions inspired by Divine Power.

The Third Division pertains to the signs and tokens revealed in the Heavenly Books. We have already mentioned that all the prophets or founders of religions have, without exception, assigned a part of their Books to explaining the coming of the Day of God, and announcing the appearance of the Face of God. Likewise they

have mentioned certain signs and tokens concerning this great Manifestation, and have described certain events and occurrences about the day of Its appearance. Some of their announcements have been couched in symbols and allegories, and some are explicitly stated, according to the language of every age and cycle. Such symbolical signs are the "darkening of the sun and moon," "rending of the heavens," "falling of stars," "renewal of heaven and earth," "rise of the dead," "the passing away of former things," and other similar events. These shall be set forth in detail, in the course of our treatises, in order that the students of the Holy Books will understand, and the adherents of laws and religions may discuss them. Such signs undoubtedly need to be accepted, but the doctors of every religion, in understanding and apprehending their meanings, have relied upon their own conceptions. Thus they have interpreted and described them in their books, according to their exoteric literal sense. They have also taught them to the people in their lectures, and inculcated them in their schools and congregations until these literal meanings have seemed incontrovertible facts and indisputable points necessary to religious beliefs. These ideas have become still more firmly rooted in hearts and memories, because they have been handed down as a heritage for long periods. Whenever a Divine Sun dawned forth from the Heaven of the Command of God, and the spirit of the Invisible World shone forth from any of the Holy Dawning-places,

He was denied by nations and contradicted by peoples, because the aforesaid prophecies were not fulfilled according to the ideas of the people and the signs did not appear as they expected them. In other words, not one of the great prophets ever appeared, and not one of the holy souls ever arose to found a religion by the Command of God, except these very signs and tokens were the first things through which the nations denied Him. For instance, what first caused the Jews to deny Christ was, that they held that there are certain signs and tokens, confirmed and clearly written in the Book concerning the coming of the Messiah, which were not then realized; and that the non-fulfillment thereof necessarily disproved the truth of Christ's claim. When Jesus appeared, they said:—"Where is the darkness of the sun"? "Where is the changing of the moon into blood"? "Where is the falling of stars"? "When did the wolf dwell with the lamb, and the lion eat straw as an ox"? "When did the child put his hand in the adder's hole, as is clearly spoken of by Isaiah"? "Where is the changing of the heaven into brass, the earth into iron, and the rain into dust, as was prophesied by Moses"? "Where is the 'new Covenant that the Lord will make with all the Israelitish tribes'; 'assembling of them together from the north, south, east and west, after their scattering and division'; 'honoring them after their degradation and fall'; 'planting them after their extirpation' "? "Where is the 'gathering which shall never be dispersed,' the 'honor which shall never

change,' and the 'planting which shall never be uprooted' "? "Where did the Lord 'restore Zion'; a restoration and building 'which shall never be destroyed,' as was prophesied by Jeremiah"? "Did all these events occur during the manifestation of Jesus, or has God deceived His servants by saying such things"? "Be this far from the Might of His Glory and the exaltation of His Beneficence and Bounty"! "Therefore all these prophecies must needs come to pass and these promises be fulfilled, even though many centuries and ages might first elapse"!

In like manner did the Christian repudiate the founder of Islam; the Moslems deny the "First Point," and the people of Beyan contradict the Beauty of El-Abha. The most astonishing fact to be noticed, is that each one of the above-mentioned peoples followed the example of the other, and walked in the highway of the same error. Nor did any one of them reflect upon the purifying and cleansing tests, the hard trials and afflictions which befell the adherents of former religions. Had they done so, they might have avoided the precipice, refrained from what destroyed other nations, and been rightly directed toward their Lord. This explanation proves that the expectation of the fulfillment of these signs, is one of the greatest tests which has prevented bygone nations from responding to the Divine Messenger, during all centuries and cycles.

The Fourth Division concerns the idea that ordinances are perpetual, and that religions can-

not be changed. There are none of the adherents of any of the extant religions and sects who do not believe that all of their laws, regulations, customs and ceremonies are everlasting, and that it is not allowable to change any of their rules and ordinances. For instance, we find the believers in the Greek Church regard theirs to be the permanent religion and sole law announced by Christ to the people of the world. The Catholics consider their own sect similarly permanent and unchangeable. So likewise the Protestants and other smaller sects, such as Nestorians, etc., maintain their own way to be the truth. Among the Mohammedans, the Sunnites and Haneefites believe that when Christ shall descend from heaven, He will judge according to the laws of Haneefa. Yet the Shi'ites, Malekis, and Hambalis protest against this monopoly of the Haneefites, and each one of these sects claims that when Christ descends, He will judge people according to their respective doctrines. The Shi'ites of the "Church of the twelve," go far beyond the followers of other sects and creeds, in this claim. They regard themselves as the nearest to the Mahdi (Precursor), and to the Christ; consequently their expectation of the appearance is greater than that of others. The divines of this sect never allow any of their laws and customs to be changed. They persistently refuse to alter any of their regulations or ceremonies, such as representations of the lives of the martyrs, the wounding of their heads, and beating upon their breasts,

which rites they perform in their gatherings and meeting-places. They hold that the Mahdi, who will arise after the Command of God, and the Spirit of God (Christ), when He descends from Heaven, must both of necessity follow their opinions and regulations in regard to religion. This is the case with all other creeds and sects branched from the Buddhist, Brahaman, Sabeian and Zoroastrian religions; likewise many others which we do not mention in this brief account. Each one believes his own sect to be the way of salvation, the announcement and promulgation of which is incumbent upon the One who appears through the Command of God. As this is the case with sects and their doctrines and ordinances, notwithstanding their unimportance in comparison with the beliefs and laws of religious systems, we need not be astonished to find that the Jews preserve their beliefs, or that Christians, Moslems, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, Brahamans and Sabeans hold to the principles of their religions, and consider their original laws obligatory and permanent necessities. When we find a people considering it a most important necessity to maintain and preserve its secondary and dogmatic tenets, we need not wonder to see it sacrificing everything pertaining to this life and the life to come, in order to sustain its principal religious beliefs. Therefore we can realize from this point of view, the greatness of the Divine Power given to the Manifestations of the Command of God; who have changed former religions and separated nations from their beliefs.

This we have previously explained. But those who were heedless of this manifest Power and erred from the right Path, became bewildered in the gloomy darkness, were dispersed in the deserts of imaginations and underwent great calamities. The purpose of this was that they might perchance be directed to the Dawning-place of this Power and to the Day-Spring of its lights. God in His mercy intended that they might through suffering, be blest by its inspiration, illumined by its radiance, and enkindled by its fire; that they might ultimately find guidance, spirituality and fragrance in the Garden of delight, and return to the Shelter of the Mercy of their Lord, the Clement, the Merciful.

Consequently, it is proven that belief in the unchangeableness of laws and religions is one of the great calamities which has descended upon bygone nations, and the most disastrous influence which led to their ruin and destruction. Even if they found it easy to relinquish their belief regarding the subject of "Return," or other signs, yet they would never sanction changing their religious ordinances, or altering any of their laws.

(In the succeeding edition the author intends to continue the Proof and Elucidation of the Behai Religion, from this point).

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